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INVENTIVE BEN; Or, HOW A BOY BECAME A JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES AND MASTER, TOO.



"'OH, GAMMON!' RETORTED BEN. 'CLEAR OUT OF THIS, OR I'LL MAKE YOU HOP PRETTY QUICK!' AND, SIGNALING THE CAPTAIN TO TAKE THE HANDLE, HE DISCHARGED AND RELOADED THE INSTRUMENT, SENDING THE BALLS WHIZZING AMONG THE INVADERS, AND FINALLY DRIVING THEM OUT OF THE PLACE."

"ALL IN THE DARK," By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG, JACK HARKAWAY, WILL COMMENCE SHORTLY.

INVENTIVE BEN;

Or,

How a Boy Became a Jack-of-all-Trades and Master, Too.

By Commodore Ah-Look.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RESULT OF TRUSTING A PARTNER.

THATCHER'S Bonanza Washer and Rinser worked to perfection, and turned out the clothes clean and sweet, on seeing which a murmur of applause arose from the persons assembled, who were loud in their congratulations, while Ben stood by the machine and graphically described its various parts.

It took some time to cleanse all the linen, for, being anxious to get their washing done cheaply, several parties sent home for a second lot, noticing which the boy remarked:

"See here, feller-citizens, we ain't set up a laundry! Buy a washer and work it for yourselves."

"How much will one cost?" demanded Mrs. Trash, who had contrived to have a fortnight's wash done by the machine.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars!" said Rullwood.

"I'm sole agent for selling this great invention."

"Then you may keep it!" spitefully replied the lady, adding, as she glanced at Ben, "Why, my clothes wouldn't cost me that to wash in ten years."

"So I should suppose, by the look of you, marm," he calmly answered. "Our idea is for several folks to buy a machine between them—say six shares at forty-one dollars sixty-seven cents, or twelve at twenty eighty-five cents each. Thatcher's Bonanza will, in two hours, do the washing of a large family, and could be conveyed from house to house in a wheelbarrow, and, marm, the thing is going to work a domestic revolution."

As he concluded his remarks the Selectmen and the ministers entered the barn in a body, in order to inspect the apparatus, noticing which Rullwood whispered to the boy:

"I'll run it now. I can talk better than you can," then took Thatcher's place, the lad reluctantly joining his relations and Fanny, all of whom were very proud of his success.

Rullwood was a great blower, and to hear him describe the washer you would have thought he had invented it. He was also a cheat, having privately sent agents to Europe to patent the invention in his own name, and thus swindle Ben out of all foreign rights.

The Selectmen, three solemn-looking individuals, poked round the machine, and listened to the florid description of the operator, who, desirous of enlisting the ministers, said:

"This is a wonderful invention; every congregation will buy one for the wife of their pastor, and the latter will be able to do without hired help."

When Thatcher, observing that the water in the lower boiler was almost exhausted, remarked, in a loud tone:

"Be careful what you are about, Rullwood. Turn on top number three." However, instead of doing this, the man closed the safety-valve, at the same time saying to Ben:

"You talk to your folks, my son. I guess I handled machinery before you were born."

"All right," answered the disgusted lad. "Go ahead, mister."

"Come, nephew, your uncle and I must git," said his aunt; so the latter carried them and Fanny to the main entrance, on reaching which they heard the works of the machine begin to rip and tear.

"Clear out!" yelled Ben. "It will blow up in a minute!" whereupon there ensued a scene that defies description.

Fortunately there were ample means of exit, and the barn was soon cleared, while the inventor, who, if he had been near the apparatus, would have averted what followed, was borne forward by the terrified mob and carried to some distance.

"Fire!" roared the men.

"Murder!" screamed the women, and, as they fled from the main entrance, Rullwood, the Selectmen and ministers scooted out at the back, after which up went Thatcher's Bonanza Washer and Rinser and his partner's five hundred dollars—the body of the machine being blown through the roof and sent sky-high; the disgusted inventor, who witnessed its flight, remarking:

"That finishes it."

"Best join me and go to Texas," smilingly observed old Perkins, who was one of the crowd. "I start in a few days, Ben, and am going to take Mrs. Crisp and her family. They will do well there."

"I reckon; I'll stay Pass a while," answered the lad. "I want to get into a machine-shop."

"I'd like to put you in prison!" cried Rullwood, advancing in a terrible rage and shaking his fist at the boy. "You fixed that on purpose to sell me. This sends all profit in the concerned thing. I've lost a pile by it and I want my money back."

"Do you?" calmly drawled the boy. "Well you won't get it. It cost me considerable to patent my bonanza, and, as you blew it up, you must suffer."

"For two pins I'd lick you," threatened the man.

"You would, eh?" queried Ben; then, noticing Billy Saunders and some of his schoolmates standing near, turned to Fanny, and said: "Give him the pins, Fan."

Withdrawing the articles from her shawl, the girl fearlessly handed them to Rullwood, while the lads sallied round the young inventor, crying:

"We'll help you, Ben!"

It was an exciting moment, for the boys meant fight; however, the bully did not, merely contenting himself with saying:

"You'll hear from my lawyer."

"Is his name Holt?" jeered the lad. "Send him along. I've had him in my 'food-catcher,'" when their further conversation was cut short by Mrs. Trash, who had lost her washed linen, which somebody had hidden by way of joke.

"Where's my things?" demanded the irate lady, advancing upon the crowd. "Benjamin Thatcher, I know you invented that machine to rob me of my linen. Come, find it for me, or I'll fix you."

"I said I'd wash and rinse your clothes," he calmly answered, "but did not agree to look after them. I don't want your old rags."

Hearing which she made a grab at his hair, when Fanny Lee caught her round the waist, and jerking her back upon the snow, remarked:

"No, you don't. You know Ben won't touch you because you are a female. Now, if you dare move, we'll snowball you."

It was comical to see the spiteful expression upon the woman's face as she gazed round upon the merry crowd, in which there were now as many girls as boys, all of whom admired Fanny's pluck in defending her friend.

"Release me, or I'll have the law on you," panted the woman.

"Let her go, Fan," grinned Ben, and as he spoke some one threw a wet mass among the crowd, and Mrs. Trash, gathering the articles in her arms, rose and started off.

As the boy and Fanny quitted the place they saw an old man named Scuffer, the town butt, coolly walking off with the remains of the Bonanza Washer.

"Hello, Aaron!" inquired Ben. "What have you got there?"

"A thunderbolt," mumbled the miser, who was not half so stupid as he looked.

"You don't say!" observed the lad. "Is it of any use to you?"

"Yes, it's of use," chuckled the man. "Of use to sell. I don't know what fool it belonged to!"

Whereupon he made off with his treasure.

"Oh, Ben," murmured Fan, "did you hear what he called you?"

"Sartin, I did," drawled her companion. "Never mind. I've got an idea worth two of it."

CHAPTER XVII.

BEN DETERMINES TO LEARN A DISMAL TRADE.

"WON'T you tell me what your new plan is?" urged Fan, as they walked homeward.

"Oh, Ben, I feel so mad about the washer being a failure!"

"I think it was a perfect success," he answered, with a sly wink. "If that big stupid, Rullwood, hadn't tried to run it, I could have sold the patent for a large sum," adding, dryly: "It did create a dome-tic revolution among the spectators, didn't it?"

"Yes; it was comical to see it burst the roof of Rullwood's barn," she went on. "However, I don't think old Aaron had any right to steal the remains and sell them."

"It was an awful sell for my partner, wasn't it?" queried the boy. "It seared him and the ministers, I tell you! When I hollered, it was laughable to see them put for the back door! Never mind, I cleared over two hundred dollars by it, and that will pay for my next experiment."

"What is it to be?" she asked.

Ben thought awhile ere he replied, his lips working as they walked on as though he was about to perpetrate a joke, and, finally, when they reached her home, he remarked:

"This is my new idea—funerals are mighty expensive, and there is a fortune to be made in reducing the undertaker's charges. Now, I think I can invent a patent casket that will fix this."

"How?" she demanded. "A casket is a casket, and has to be paid for."

"Never mind," was his response. "I ain't particularly fond of the trade, but mean to go to Pottsville Centre and learn it."

"Oh, it's a horrid business, Ben!" she cried. "I wouldn't go into it."

"I never yet heard of a female undertaker," he chuckled, "though there are lots of women doctors, who must go right over them. Guess I won't remain at it longer than is necessary to carry out my invention, when I'll dispose of it and try something more lively!"

And, after nodding to her, he entered his relative's house, where he found his aunt in tears.

"What are you crying about?" he inquired.

"Oh, Benjamin!" sobbed the old lady. "I felt so mad when I saw your beautiful apparatus go up! I'd hoped you had invented some thing to that big, fat Rullwood, and, as your uncle and I came back home, everybody laughed and talked about your past failure."

"Oh, never mind," he cheerfully returned. "I'm no worse off than Fulton and Morse, and Goodyear and Edison—great inventors have to put up with big disappointments, but I've already thought of a new trade."

"Nothing with machinery in it, that will blow up!" she asked.

"Well, no," he drawled. "I'm going into the funeral trade."

"Benjamin Thatcher," she solemnly remarked, "don't you do it. I had a brother in that line, and he took to drink."

"Was he an inventor?" innocently inquired Ben.

"No," she said. "But all your smartness won't save you. It's a miserable profession, and you'll get down-hearted and low-spirited, and will follow poor Tommy!"

"Your aunt speaks wisely," put in his uncle. "It ain't any sort of trade for you, so give up the idea, my boy." However he only laughed, and told them that as he saw money in it, he meant to try his hand; then, nodding cheerfully, started for Perkins's house.

"He's down at the smithy," said Mrs. Crisp, who was engaged in packing the furniture ready for shipment. "I'm so thankful to you for the good turn you did me. I had almost given up in despair when you came like an angel of mercy, and I shall always regard you as such."

"You must have a queer idea of angels," was his rejoinder, as his eyes twinkled. "Well, marm, everybody has their fancies, and I'm glad I'm handsome enough for what you think," and, smiling to himself, he walked down to the smith's shop.

Since Nogga had hoisted his shingle Ben had never entered the place, spite of which he now sauntered in, and presently discovered his former teacher and employer, who were down a trap-hole in the floor, examining the machinery for blowing the bellows.

"I can't make it out," ejaculated Perkins. "You'll have to send for the boy;" when the latter shouted down the hole:

"What's the trouble?" on which Noggs replied, in his usual haughty fashion:

"Ah, I want you. Just step down here and fix this machinery."

"Ah!" was the long-drawn response. "What did you say?"

"I told you to come here and see to this machinery," was the surly rejoinder; whereupon, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, Ben calmly answered:

"When you were my teacher you licked me, Mr. Nogga, and got me hoisted from school; now I can fix you. Blow your bellows yourself, for I'll never repair the works."

With a yell of rage the ill-tempered man clambered up to the floor, and would once more have beaten the boy, but the latter, seizing a pair of long pincers, whipped a red-hot iron out of the fire and held it before him, thus keeping his would-be assailant at bay, saying as he did so:

"Not so fast, Mr. Nogga. You ain't teaching school now," while Perkins, who had ascended from the hole, quietly observed:

"Well, young man, if Ben won't help you I can't."

"You little pest!" blessed the angry smith, "what business are you going to try next?"

"Undertaking," calmly answered Ben, as he threw down his weapon. "I shall be happy to do anything for you in that line, Mr. Newmac Noggs."

When the arrival of a hoge to shoe ended the controversy.

"How you do hate that fellow!" remarked Perkins. "Surely you ought to forgive him for punishing you."

"Oh, I've done that long ago," smilingly responded the boy. "What I feel mad about is the way he worried Fanny Lee."

"She ain't any relation of yours, is she?" queried the old smith.

"No," murmured Ben, "she ain't; but she's a friend of mine, and I won't allow anybody to annoy her," and, changing the conversation, added: "I've got a big thing on hand," after which he informed his friend of what he was going to do.

"So you mean to try the undertaking, eh?" slowly remarked Perkins. "I know a nice man in the business. He buried my stepmother. We will stop into the grocery-store. I'll give you a line to him."

On parting with his late employer, Thatcher said:

"I'll write and tell you how I get on, and you must let me know how the Crisps succeed;" then, having shaken hands, each went his way.

On his road homeward the boy read the address of the letter, which ran as follows:

"Mr. Ike McIvor, Pottsville Centre."

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE PATENT CASKET WORKED.

ALTHOUGH Pottsville Centre was only eight miles from Scrub Oak, Ben had never visited the city, as it was called, so, before the boy started, his uncle gave him full directions with regard to his route, after which, picking up his carpet-bag, the young inventor prepared to quit his home.

"Good-by, nevvy," mournfully remarked his aunt, throwing an old shoe after him for luck. "You'll rue this trip."

"Come back soon," urged Mr. Wilkins, who was as sorry as his wife to lose the lad's company.

"Write us, Ben," said Fanny, half opening the front-door of her aunt's house. "I think you're real foolish to go into any such business as coffin making."

"So long," he merrily replied. "Wait until I bring home a roll of bills and show you the foolish profits!" and away he swung at a brisk gait until he was clear of the village, when, hooking the head of his George Washington stick into the handles of his bag, he paused, glanced back at the old place and murmured: "It's confounded strange my friends are so down on my ideas." Well, it's the way of the world, and all great inventors have had to put up with such. Good-by, Scrub Oak; I will next visit you in triumph."

Saying which he wheeled round and set off at a brisk pace, arriving at his destination just as the people of Pottsville Centre were breakfasting.

"Ike McIvor!" queried a schoolboy, to whom our friend applied for information. "Which Ike? There's three of them!"

"The undertaker," responded Ben.

"They're all undertakers," said the lad, grinning like a hyena.

"Which one buried Mr. Perkins's stepmother?" gravely asked Thatcher.

"How in thunder do I know?" answered the other, and he was walking off when Ben stopped him, saying:

"See here, young fellow, which is the smartest of the crowd?"

"Red Ike," replied the boy. "He says he's bound to drive his cousins out of the Centre. They were all apprenticed to old Ike, and named for him, and each of them expected to get his business, but when he died he left in his will that they were to share his stock and start separately, so that the smartest would do the trade, and the others have to knuckle under to him, which they never would have done if they had been partners. Red Ike is getting the custom. He has all the latest improvements, and is ahead, I tell you!"

Having found the street in which the McIvors did business, Ben entered the first store—the three being exactly alike and in a row, and, addressing a woman, asked:

"Is this Mr. Red Ike's?"

"No!" snapped the lady; "this is Black Ike's. Who do you want to see?"

"Nobody in this shop," he answered, backing out, and in a short time he was in the next warehouse, where he beheld a big, fat man, whose face was smothered in a mass of auburn hair, and who, on seeing him, said, in a mechanical voice, like a boy crying "heads or tails":

"Man or woman?"

"I never spin for cents," answered Thatcher, who thought the undertaker was fond of gambling, and would toss any one for a nickel. "I wish to see Mr. Red Ike McIvor."

"Oh, I thought you wanted a coffin," grunted the man. "I'm Red Ike."

"You look it," thought the lad, as he handed him Perkins's note, upon perusing which the other remarked:

"This is for my late uncle; he's dead, but I represent him. What do you want?"

After stating that he desired to learn the business, and had a plan by which money could be made out of it, the boy said:

"Everybody likes to splurge on the cheap, nowadays, even in funerals. Don't they?"

"Yes," nodded the man. "I scarcely get any profit, as I have to cut under my opponents' prices. What is your plan?"

"This," said Ben. "You make a plain, cheap coffin, and contrive it so that it can be fixed inside my patent casket, which will be silver-mounted and cloth-covered, but without any bottom. When you reach the cemetery lower the entire contrivance into the grave, and jerk a line, which will release my invention; this you can draw up and use again and again. Now, ain't that a first-class idea, mister?"

"Elegant!" murmured the man. "I can give a magnificent funeral, with an apparently gorgeous casket, for fifty dollars, and pocket a handsome sum, and as I shall patent the invention, none of my rivals will be able to use it. Now, show me your plan in detail."

"You must first teach me your trade," quietly responded Thatcher, and that morning he was duly installed in the shop, and set to work on the dismal business.

Within a week he and red Ike had built the most gorgeous silver-gilt, cloth-covered, satin-lined casket ever seen in Pottsville Centre—one that would take any size coffin, and which was the admiration of all who saw it.

No sooner was it completed than out went a flaming advertisement, and the contrivance was put into instant use, so anxious were the folks to have elegant but cheap funerals, when, just as everything was going nicely, and Ben pocketing two dollars each time his invention was used, the following circumstances occurred:

An Irishman, named Tim Mulligan, died, and his countrymen decided to honor him with a first-class funeral; so, seeing McIvor's announcement, they gave him the job, he naturally thinking that they knew all about his patent, which was duly conveyed to the late residence of the deceased, and Tim's remains fixed much more luxuriously than ever he had been in life.

"Sure Red Ike does it elegantly for the money!" remarked the widow. "It's a pleasure to die and be buried in such foine style."

This and similar compliments were showered upon Thatcher's employer, and he began to ask the boy how much he would take for his rights in the concern; but Ben was not anxious to dispose of it for a while.

Ten similar sham-caskets, each worth over two hundred dollars, were put in hand, and on the day that Tim was buried all of them were in use.

The Irishman's funeral was well attended, the committee who directed the matter were loudly praised for its elegance, and, after the usual services, the body was conveyed to the cemetery; but when Red Ike was about to remove the patent apparatus, one Barney Sullivan, who had been the bosom-friend of the deceased, stopped the undertaker, with:

"Lave that!"

"Leave what?" demanded McIvor, tugging at the line in order to release the spring.

"That casket!" hotly answered Barney.

"It ain't included in the charge," remarked Ben.

"You shut up; nobody spoke to yes!" thundered the man; then again addressing Ike, he observed, in an indignant tone:

"Bad cess to yes! Would ye be after robbing poor Tim's corpse?"

Shrugging his shoulders, the undertaker continued his attempt to recover his property, whereupon Barney turned to the indignant crowd and yelled:

"Boys, give these miserable crayters bally-hoo!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THATCHER MEETS WITH A GREAT INVENTOR.

THE mourners responded, like true men, to the call, the sequel of Barney Sullivan, and went both for the undertaker and inventor, who, relinquishing all further attempt to regain possession of the casket, started for the hearse.

Thatcher, being ahead, mounted upon the box, and, seizing the reins, whipped up the horses, while Red Ike contrived to clamber inside the vehicle, which was started at full speed, the boy taking a short cut out of the cemetery, and in so doing driving into a big hole and reducing the conveyance to kindling.

"I'll murder you!" bellowed the undertaker, as he scrambled from the ruins and rushed after Ben; however, he was soon compelled to give up the pursuit.

Knowing full well that it would not be good for his health to have an interview with his infuriated employer, our young friend made the best of his way back to the shop, and, securing his carpet-bag, proceeded to the railway depot, thinking, as he went:

"Confound it, how contrarywise my inventions do sometimes work! Fanny was right; I was real foolish to go into my late business, but I won't return to Scrub Oak and have folks laugh at me."

"Where to?" demanded the ticket-clerk.

"Mechanicsborough!" replied Ben, and in a few moments he was on board the train.

There was one good quality about the lad—he was never disheartened by failure, and no sooner had he quitted Pottsville Centre than he set to thinking out a new idea.

The car in which he travelled was filled with workingmen, and presently two of them, who were seated near him, began to talk about the various means used in propelling canal-boats, one of them observing:

"There's a big fortune for the person who succeeds in making an engine that will drive a boat without washing down the banks of the canal!"

"Captain Sherman tried it and failed," said the other, "It wants some clear-headed fellow, with money, to take hold of that same idea and improve upon it."

"I guess I could do it," said Ben, addressing the men. "I've invented a heap of things in my time."

On which he related some of his experiences, his recital creating considerable amusement.

"You didn't make much out of your coffin," laughingly remarked a bystander.

"I calculate I got out of it than you will of yours," was his pat rejoinder; adding, as he gazed innocently round, "It's a mournful subject, anyhow. Can you tell me where I can find Captain Sherman?"

"In Mechanicsborough," answered one of the men who had spoken of the great inventor. "You'll suit him to a dot, my son."

"Well, I'll pay him a visit," said the lad; however, it was dark before they arrived at their destination, so he did not call on the captain that night.

Next morning Thatcher rose early, and after partaking of breakfast, made the best of his way to the factory which was pointed out as Sherman's—a big, lumbering building standing on a lot by itself, littered around it being a chaotic assemblage of old boilers, broken engines and various articles in the junk line.

"Is the captain in?" inquired Ben of a small boy who answered his knock.

"He's always in the top-floor, experimenting on a life-saving apparatus," squeaked the janitor. "Can't you tell me your business?"

"I'm an inventor," drawled our young friend. "I want to see him about his canal-boat motor."

"Go right along, nonny!" was the sharp response, and leaving Ben to grope his way up the encumbered stairs, the small boy went whistling off.

Upon gaining the first floor Thatcher paused, and glanced around him at the various machines and portions of models that were ranged about in picturesque confusion.

"This is the man for my money," he murmured, moving from one apparatus to the other. "If I can only get an engagement with him my fortune is made," when he heard a popping noise above, whereupon he resumed his climbing, the sound being repeated at intervals.

On he went, lingering, as he reached each floor, to glance at the various treasures, which, to any

other boy, would have been most uninteresting, and presently he arrived at the top entry, and opening the door, was stepping inside, when something struck him violently in the stomach and knocked the breath out of his body.

For a few moments, being utterly unable to speak, Ben remained knocked up, but upon recovering himself he observed a man at the other end of the loft, who, having his back to the lad, had not noticed his entrance.

"See here!" shouted Ben, as a second missive flew from a machine, the handle of which was turned by the absorbed individual. "stop it!" hearing which Captain Sherman, for it was he, paused in the act of firing a third shot, and advancing toward the panting boy, meekly inquired:

"Can I do anything for you?" at the same time stooping and picking up some hollow, composite balls, one of which had been the cause of Thatcher's agonay.

"Are you Captain Sherman?" groaned Ben, as he rubbed the region of his digestive organs. "Do you know you hit me with one of those things?"

"Did I?" pleasantly answered the man. "I was trying my life-saving apparatus."

"It nearly killed me," responded his visitor, after which he took a good look at the operator.

Sherman was a tall, lean, one-eyed and one-legged man, and was scarred across his many battle soldiers, which gave him a somewhat ferocious appearance, while, in truth, he was as gentle, childlike and talented a being as ever breathed.

"Sorry I hurt you, my son," he sympathetically replied. "Will you tell me what I can do for you?"

Ben briefly related his desire, to which the captain listened with a grim smile; after which the old man said:

"My lad, are you prepared to be half starved, blown up, wounded, scalded, maimed, tortured and kept up to your chin in debt?"

"Eh?" queried his visitor.

"Do you wish to struggle on from year to year, producing things that go to benefit others? Do you desire to be a worse slave to science than a drunkard is to his cup?"

"I don't know what you are driving at?" was the boy's amazed response.

"I mean this," sadly answered the great inventor: "If you are not afraid to face all these dangers, and have got any brains in your head, and will work for me without pay until my next venture produces its golden results, I'll take you;" whereupon, smiling in his old-time fashion, Ben shook his new friend's hand, saying:

"I'll chance it, captain."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CANAL-BOAT MOTOR.

THE old inventor warmly returned the pressure of the young one's hand, then led the way to the far end of the loft, and, pointing to an instrument that looked like a coffee-mill, furnished with a bent top and mounted on a pivot, smilingly remarked:

"This is my last patent—my life-saving apparatus. I was trying it at a low grade when you entered, and, unfortunately, struck you with one of the projectiles. This is how it works," saying which he inserted a composition ball in the mouth of the machine, and, fastening a cord in a ring secured to the shot, gently turned the handle, when pop went the life-saver, and ball and line shot out from it.

"You see, I can only work this machine mildly and horisontally," explained Sherman. "But if it were on the ground, in front of a burning building, I could send a line to any given window or point, and when it was secured by the people inside, they could haul up an iron-jointed ladder that I have patented, and by its means escape from any height."

"You ought to make a pile of money by this," said Ben, as he carefully examined the affair. "It's a big thing!"

"Yes, it is the most useful invention I have ever perfected," sadly returned the old man, showing his new assistant how to elevate and depress the muzzle, and to increase the power of the force, which was created by compressed air. "Mugson don't know anything about this."

"Who is he?" demanded Thatcher; whereupon, the captain seated himself on an old box, and, sighing, lighted his pipe and puffed a while, after which he remarked:

"My lad, I suppose you have heard of people selling themselves to the evil one?"

"Yes," nodded Ben, who wondered what was coming. "However, I did not know it was done nowadays."

"It is," solemnly replied the crippled man. "I belong to Mugson; he owns this factory, all this machinery, and myself, for I am terribly in his debt. Fortunately, he is now abroad, so I have borrowed enough money from some friends to enable me to perfect this invention, and before he returns, I shall be able to sever my connection with him and to begin life anew."

"It appears to me," bluntly observed Ben, "that you want somebody to manage your business for you, or you'll never make anything by it. Why, I have cleared more by my little improvements than you have with your big ones. Suppose you sell this machine to me? I'll pay you a thousand dollars for it, and after I have recouped my outlay will honestly divide the profits with you."

"I'll do it," said the captain. "Mugson will be awfully mad, but won't be able to help himself. It's a deal, my boy," and, holding out his hand, the veteran closed the bargain.

Within a week the money was paid over by Ben's uncle, a workshop was hired, and the Fire Department invited to inspect the invention; the result being a time named for Thatcher to give an exhibition of the life-saver; meanwhile Captain Sherman reared the little prospect he possessed from his factory and joined his young friend.

On the day appointed, Ben wheeled the machine in front of a big warehouse, and, in the presence of the Fire Commissioners, gave an exhibition of its power, sending the shot and line in any direction they desired, and completely demonstrating the excellence of the apparatus.

That afternoon a man called at the workshop and offered twenty-five hundred dollars for the patent, on hearing which the boy agreed to sell.

In vain Sherman shortly protested. Ben was firm, and the amount was paid, on receiving which he handed the captain fifteen hundred dollars, remarking:

"See here, cap; now we start fairly. I have given you all the money, which is more than you ever cleared by anything. After this we'll invent together, and share and share alike."

"Benjamin," said the old fellow, "you American boys are real smart. My German training taught me to aim for big results, while your shrewdness teaches you to look after small gains."

"It's been sense that enables us to get along," drawled Ben, as he prepared to pack the apparatus for shipment. "You and I will in future work together and rake in the money. I see that you beat me at inventing, cap, but I'm a better business man than you are."

"What will Mugson say to all this?" queried Sherman.

"Oh, I'll fix him!" chuckled Ben, when the door of the shop was thrown open, and in stalked a big, ugly-looking individual, followed by a gang of rowdies.

"It's Mugson!" timidly whispered the captain.

On hearing which Thatcher calmly loaded the life-saver, and, addressing the intruders, demanded:

"Well, what do you fellers want?"

"That machine is mine!" thundered Mugson. "Every article under miserable, old cripple makes belongs to me!"

"Oh, gammon!" retorted Ben. "Clear out of this, or I'll make you hop pretty quick!"

And, signaling the captain to take the handle, he discharged a ball, which carried the instrument, sending the balls whizzing among the invaders, and finally driving them out of the place.

"I'll make it warm for you," yelled Mugson, as he ducked in order to avoid the last shot, and he did make it warm for them, for the swish after boy him. However, Sherman paid off his debts, and with a light heart set to work upon a new propeller for canal-boats; Thatcher assisting him and making improvements in his partner's wooden limb that enabled the old man to use it almost as well as a real one.

Of course all this took money, but so great was Ben's faith in Sherman that he risked every cent he had made, and even borrowed a hundred dollars of his uncle, which he promised to pay when they sold their first patent rights.

On a bright May morning a new canal-boat, hired for the experiment, and fitted with "Sherman & Thatcher's non-wave producing propeller," was launched, and while the captain and Ben being in command, while on the towpath stood his uncle and aunt, Fanny, Nathaniel Noggs, Padmore, Briggs and his son, London, and a large crowd of canal-boatmen and mule-drivers.

Hoisting the Stars and Stripes upon the flagstaff fixed abaft, Thatcher busied himself with preparing seats for a number of boat-owners who had been invited to make the trip, while his partner attended the machinery, which was worked by compressed air, thus rendering an explosion almost impossible.

"I suppose you think you have a big thing there," jeered Noggs, who had come hoping to see a failure.

The boy did not reply to this or any other of the chaff directed at him, but, welcoming the visitors of the day, about twenty wealthy-looking individuals, cast off the shore plank and shouted to the captain:

"Now show the folks the beauties of our invention!"

CHAPTER XXI.

BEN IS LEFT TO FIGHT IT OUT.

CONTRARY to the hope of Noggs and the mule-drivers, the canal-boat glided through the water without so much as causing a ripple behind, and, after proceeding a mile, came back stern first, going just as easily as she had done the other way; this being accomplished, the visitors went below to inspect the machinery, the details of which were explained by Sherman.

As Thatcher pushed a plank on shore in order to take aboard his friends, he overheard Noggs say:

"It's all puppy will never make anything by his precious invention; the mule-drivers will take care of that."

"Are you referring to me?" demanded the lad, addressing the smith.

"You can take it to yourself if you like," was the surly retort. However, Ben did not care to quarrel with him, and presently forgot all about the fellow.

When the boat-owners came on deck they pronounced the motor a perfect success, after which Ben handed up a luncheon, and his aunt and Fanny spread a cloth abaft, the visitors doing ample justice to the fare.

"I always said you'd succeed, Thatcher," remarked Padmore, as he helped himself to a sandwich. "Now, take my advice, when you have disposed of your interest in this thing go to school again and complete your education."

"I'll see about that!" dryly answered the boy. "I've got a good teacher in the captain," when, as he spoke, Sherman motioned him aside and whispered:

"My son, these canal-boat owners want to know how much we'll take for the patent?"

"Oh, we don't want to sell out cheap to small men like them," said Ben. "We'll go to New York and see what we can get in terms of a thousand boats. They can afford to pay a good price."

"You are right," murmured the old boy; "I'll give these parties an evasive answer."

Then, when lunch was over, they took a string of boats in tow, and working up to full speed, started for Scrub Oak, near which the canal ran, on its way eastward.

"You'll have all the folks turn out to welcome you," observed his aunt. "But I don't see why you should give a passage to Mr. Noggs and Mr. Briggses," pointing to those individuals, who were seated on one of the boats astern. "If you had heard what they said about you just now you would be cautious how you trusted them."

"I can't see what Newman Noggs has to be mad about," was his response.

"Don't you understand?" said Fanny, in a low tone. "Briggs owns a large number of mules that they use in towing the boats, and Noggs is said to be partial to Briggs's going to marry his daughter Sally. Look out for him, Ben!"

But the boy only laughed, for, knowing the invention was a success, he felt good, and had no wish to quarrel with any one.

The canal-boat's next direct course for Scrub Oak, while the railroad ran at right angles to it; thus the journey by water to the place only occupied eight hours—that is, in a boat propelled by power.

At every lock they were joined by additional craft, most of which were filled with rough-looking men. However, Thatcher's vessel towed them all easily, and by six o'clock he landed his guests on Briggs's wharf, and casting off the other boats, went ahead to the next bend, which was about a quarter of a mile from Scrub Oak, where they made fast for the night.

It was too late in the evening for any demonstration, but the selectmen, who met them on mooring, told the boy that on the following day there would be a grand procession of the fire companies and temperance societies, and that the partners would be escorted to the town hall.

"Said I'd return in triumph to the old place!" murmured Ben, on which his aunt advised him not to be proud, the demonstration being as much intended to spite the defiance of the Noggs faction as in the inventor's honor.

"Yes, Noggs made himself very obnoxious at the town meeting," observed Mr. Wilkins. "Still the citizens of Scrub Oak mean to show you that they admire your success," then, turning to his wife, added, "Come, Mrs. Wilkins, suppose we go home and get some supper ready for nevvy and his friend?"

"Oh, we've got plenty to eat," responded the lad. "You stay and sup with us," and soon they had the kettle boiling.

As they sat down to their meal, some one on the shore uttered a peculiar low whistle, repeating it several times in quick succession.

"That's one of our mule-drivers," said Fanny. "You better go and see who it is."

"I will, when I have had my supper," he merrily replied. "This child is hungry."

They were a happy party; the partners proud of their success, the old folks thrilled to death to think that their much-despised nephew was about to become the lion of Scrub Oak, and the girl prouder than all the rest, for, as she said:

"I've always stood up for inventive Ben, and he has wrought wonders!"

After the repast was over, the whistling on shore recommenced, so Ben sprang on to the towpath, and, walking along its edge, presently arrived at a clump of willows, from which the sound appeared to proceed. On his reconnoitring the signal, he heard the voice of his old chum, Billy Saunders, inviting him to come closer.

"What is it, Bill?" he asked.

"Schish!" breathed the lad. "Ben, they are going to attack you to-night. I overheard them talking about it down to Briggs's wharf."

"Who are they?" demanded Thatcher.

"The mule-drivers, and Briggs and Noggs!" breathed the boy. "It ain't any good showing fight, so you'd better go home and leave them to do as they like with your invention."

"Billy," dryly replied our young friend, "you remember when Newman licked me, don't you?"

"Yes," said the hidden boy; "but that was one man; now Noggs has got a couple of hundred fellows to back him, and they'll kill you. They say your motor will starve ten thousand families. Take my advice, chum, and git. Now, I must go. Don't you ever tell anybody that I warned you."

Ben stood for a moment and thought over the situation, after which he murmured:

"The captain said I must expect certain little onpleasantnesses if I wanted to become as big an inventor as he is. Well, I'll take the chances."

Saying which he returned to the boat, where he found his friends getting ready to go home.

When they had departed he informed Captain Sherman of what he had learned, the old man listening most attentively.

"Guess we better go home and leave them to do as they like with the machine," he sighed. "It's always the way; just as our hopes are brightest, something comes to render us miserable. I can't spare any more of my limbs, so come along, my son."

The boy heard him through, assisted the old fellow to land, and pointed out the road to Scrub Oak, but refused to accompany him.

"Do come," urged Sherman. "You don't know the ispy of a mob."

However, the lad would not listen to him, his last words being:

"You look out for yourself, captain. It's the mob who don't know inventive Ben."

(To be continued.)

"Inventive Ben" was commenced in No. 643.

MARY BRAND.

ONE fine sunny evening in April of 1847, when the cottonwoods on the banks of the Arkansas began to put forth their buds, and robins and bluebirds—harbingers of Spring—were hopping, with gaudy plumage, through the thickets, three white-tilted Conestoga wagons emerged from the timbered bottom of the river and rumbled slowly over the prairie, in the direction of the Platte's waters. Each wagon was drawn by eight oxen, and contained a portion of the farming implements and household utensils of the Brand family.

The teams were driven by the young boys, the men following in the rear with shouldered rifles—old Brand himself, mounted on a fine Indian horse, leading the advance. The women were safely housed under the wagon-tilts, and out of the first the mild face of Mary Brand smiled adieu to many of her old companions who had accompanied them the far, and now wished them "God-speed" on their long journey.

Some mountaineers galloped up, dressed in buckskin, and gave them rough greeting, warning the men to keep their eye skinned," and look out for the Arapahoe, who were out on the waters of the Platte.

Presently all retired, and then the huge wagons and the little company were rolling on their solitary way through the deserted prairies, passing the first of the many thousand miles which lay between them and the "evening sun," as the Indians style the distant regions of the Far West. And on, without casting a look behind him, doggedly and boldly marched old Brand, followed by his sturdy family.

They made but a few miles that evening, for the first day the cattle all that is effected, and nearly the whole morning is taken up in getting fairly under way. The loose stock had been sent off earlier, for they had been collected and corrailed the previous night, and, after a twelve hours' last, it was necessary they should reach the end of the day's journey betimes.

They found the herd grazing in the bottom of the Arkansas, at a point previously fixed upon for their first camp. Here the oxen were unyoked, and the wagons drawn up so as to form the three sides of a small square.

The women descended from their seats and prepared the evening meal.

A huge fire was kindled before the wagons, and round it the whole party collected; while large kettles of coffee boiled on it, and hoe-cakes baked upon the embers.

The women were sadly down-hearted, as well they might be, with the dreary prospect before them; and poor Mary, when she saw the Mormon encampment shut out from her sight by the rolling bluffs, and nothing before her but the bleak, barren prairie, could not divest herself of the idea that she had, looked for the last time on civilized fellow-creatures, and fairly burst into tears.

In the morning the heavy wagons rolled on again across the upland prairies, to strike the trail used by the traders in passing from the South Fork of the Platte to the Arkansas.

They had for guide a Canadian coureur, who had been in the service of the Indian traders, and knew the route well, and had agreed to pilot them to Fort Lancaster, on the North Fork of the Platte.

Their course led for about thirty miles up the Boiling Spring River, whence they pursued a northeasterly course to the dividing ridge which separates the waters of the Platte and Arkansas. Their progress was slow, for the ground was saturated with wet, and exceedingly heavy for the cattle, and they scarcely advanced more than ten miles a day.

At the camp-fire at night, Antoine, the Canadian guide, amused them with tales of the wild life and perilous adventures of the hunters and trappers who make the mountains their home; often exforting a scream from the women by the description of some scene of Indian fight and slaughter, or beguiling them of a commiserating tear by the narrative of the sufferings and privations endured by those hardy hunters in their arduous life.

Mary listened with the greater interest since she remembered that such was the life which had been led by one very dear to her—by one, long supposed to be dead, of whom she had never but once since his departure, nearly fifteen years before, heard a syllable.

Her imagination pictured him as the bravest and most daring of these adventurous hunters, and conjured up his figure charging through the midst of whooping savages, or stretched on the ground perishing from wounds, or cold, or lake starvation.

Among the characters who figured in Antoine's stories a hunter named La Bonte was made conspicuous for deeds of hardiness and daring.

The first mention of the name caused the blood to rush to Mary's face; not that she for a moment imagined it was her La Bonte, for she knew the name was a common one; but, associated with feelings which she had never got the better of, it recalled a sad epoch in her former life, to which she could not look back without mingled pain and pleasure.

Once only, and about two years after his departure, had she ever received tidings of her former lover.

A mountaineer had returned from the Far West to settle in his native State, and had found his way to the neighborhood of old Brand's farm.

Meeting him by accident, Mary, hearing him speak of the mountain hunters, had inquired, tremblingly, after La Bonte.

Her informant knew him well, had trapped in company with him, and had heard at the trading-fort, whence he had taken his departure for the settlements, that La Bonte had been killed on the Yellowstone by Knuckleet, which report was confirmed by some Indians of that nation.

This was all she had ever learned of the lover of her youth.

Now, upon hearing the name of La Bonte so often mentioned by Antoine, a vague hope was raised in her breast that he was still alive, and she took an opportunity of questioning the Canadian closely on the subject.

"Who was this La Bonte, Antoine, who, you say, was so brave a mountaineer?" she asked, one day.

"J'ne sais pas; he vas un beau garçon, and strong comme le diable—enfant de garce, mais he pas not care a dam for les sauvages, pe gar. He shoot de coniare avec his carabine, an ride de cheval comme one Comanche. He trap heap castor (what you call beevare), and get plenty dollare—mais he open hand vare wide—and got none, too. Den, he hont vid de Blackfeet and avec de Cheyenne, and all round de montaignes he vas known right."

"But, Antoine, what became of him at last, and why did he not come home, when he made so many dollars?" asked poor Mary.

"Enfant de garce, mais pourquoi he come home? Pe gar, de montaigne-man, he love de montaigne and prairie more better dan he love de grandes villes—meme de Saint Louis ou de Montreal. Wagh! La Bonte, well, he one montaigne-man, wagh! He love de buffalo and de chevreaux plus que de bœuf and de mouton, maybe. Mais one fit dat he have autre raison—dat de gal he lote in Missouri not lofe him, and for dis he not go back. Mais now he go oodare, m' on dit. He vas go to de Californe, maybe to steal de hoss and de mule, pe gar, and de Espagnols rub him out, and take his hair, so he mort."

"But are you sure of this?" she asked, trembling with grief.

"Ah, now, j'ne suis pas sur, mais I tink you know dis La Bonte. Enfant de garce, maybe you de gal in Missouri he lofe, and not love him. Pe gar! 'tant de grace, fort beau garçon dis La Bonte, pourquoi you ne l'aimez pas! Maybe he not gone oodar. Maybe he turn op, antrefois. De trapparess, dey go oodar tree, four, ten times, one, two, maybe twenty time. De ssarrage not abie for kill La Bonte, ni de dam Espagnols. Ah, non! ne craignez pas; pe gar, he not gone oodare encore."

Spite of the good-natured attempts of the Canadian, poor Mary burst into a flood of tears; not that the information took her unawares, for she had long believed him dead, but because the very mention of his name awoke the strongest feelings within her breast, and taught her how deep was the affection she had felt for him whose loss and violent fate she now bewailed.

As the wagons of the lone caravan roll on toward the Platte, we will return to a camp where La Bonte, Killbuck, and a stranger are sitting before the fire. Said Killbuck:

"The devil's of them Mormon fools can't be beat by Spaniards, stranger. Their mummums and thummums you speak of won't 'shine' whar Injuns are about; nor pint out a trail whar nothin' crossed but rattlesnakes since Sam Houston's old Pike's Peak. If they pack along them prodjix, as you tell of, who can make it rain hump-ribs and marrowguts when the crowd gets out of the buffler range, they are 'some' now, that's a fact. But this child don't believe it. I'd laugh to get a sight of these darned Mormonites, I would. They're 'no account,' I guess; and it's the 'meanest' kind of action to haul their women critters and their young 'uns to such a starving country as the Calloriays."

"They are not all Mormons in the crowd," said the strange hunter; "and there's one family among them with some smartish boys and girls, I tell you. Their name's Brand."

La Bonte looked up from the luck of his rifle, which he was cleaning—but either didn't hear, or, hearing, didn't heed, for he continued his work.

"And they are going to part company," continued the stranger, "and put out alone for Platte and the South Pass."

"They'll lose their hair, I'm thinking," said Killbuck, "if the Rapahoe are out thar."

"I hope not," continued the other, "for there's a girl among them worth more than that."

"Poor beaver!" said La Bonte, looking up from his work. "I'd hate to see any white gal in the hands of Injuns, and of Rapahoes worse than all. Where does she come from, stranger?"

"Down below St. Louis, from Tennessee, I've heard them say."

"Tennessee!" cried La Bonte; "hurrah for the old State! What's her name, stran——"

At the moment Killbuck's old mule pricked her ears and snuffed the air, which action catching La Bonte's eye, he rose abruptly, without waiting a reply to his question, and exclaimed:

"The old mule smells Injuns, or I'm a Spaniard!"

The hunter did the old mule justice, and she well maintained her reputation as the best "guard" in the mountain; for in two minutes an Indian stalked into the camp, dressed in a cloth capote, and in odds and ends of civilized attire.

"Rapaho!" cried Killbuck, as soon as he saw him; and the Indian, catching the word, struck his hand upon his breast and exclaimed, in broken Spanish and English mixed:

"Si, si, me Arapho, white man amigo. Come from Puebla—hunt cibola—me gun break—*no peude matar nada: mucha hambra* (very hungry)—heap eat."

Killbuck offered his pipe to the Indian, and spoke to him in his own language, which both he and La Bonte well understood. They learned that he was married to a Mexican woman, and lived with some hunters at the Pueblo fort on the Arkansas. He volunteered the information that a war party of his people were out on the Platte trail to intercept the Indian traders on their return from the North Fork; and as some "Mormons" had just started in that direction, he said his people would make a "raise." Being my amigo himself to the whites, he cautioned his present companions from crossing to the "divide," as the "braves," he said, were a "heap" mad, and their hearts were "big," and nothing in the shape of white skin would live before them.

"Wagh!" exclaimed Killbuck, "the Rapahoes know me, I'm thinking; and small gain they've made against this child. I've knowed the time when my gun-cover couldn't hold more of their scalps."

The Indian was provided with some powder, of which he stood in need; and, after gorging as much meat as his capacious stomach would hold, he left the camp and started into the mountain.

The next day our hunters started on their journey down the river, traveling leisurely, and stopping whenever good grass presented itself. One morning they suddenly struck a wheel-trail, which left the creek banks and pursued a course at right angles to it, in the direction of the "divide." Killbuck pronounced it but a few hours old, and that of three wagons drawn by oxen.

"Wagh!" he exclaimed; "if them poor devils ot Mormonites ain't going head first into Rapaho trap; they'll be 'gone beaver' afore long."

"Ay," said the strange hunter, "these are the wagons belonging to old Brand, and he has started alone for Lamarie. I hope nothing will happen to them."

"Brand!" muttered La Bonte. "I knowed that name mighty well once, years ago; and should hate the worst kind that mischief happened to any one who bore it. The trail's as fresh as paint; and it goes against me to let these simple critters fall in the Rapahoes to their own hair. This child feels like helping 'em out of the scrape. What do you say, old hoss?"

"I thinks with you, boy," answered Killbuck, "and go in for following this wagon-trail, and telling the poor critters that that's danger ahead of them. What's your talk, stranger?"

"I go with you," shortly answered the latter; and both followed after La Bonte, who was already trotting smartly on the trail.

Meanwhile the three wagons, containing the household goods of the Brand family, rumbled slowly over the rolling prairie, and toward the upland ridge of the "divide," which, studded with dwarf pine and cedar thicket, rose gradually before them.

They traveled with considerable caution, for already the quick eye of Antoine had discovered recent sign upon the trail, and, with mountain quickness, had at once made it out to be that of a war-party; for there were no horses with them, and after one or two of the moccasin-tracks the mark of a rope which trailed upon the ground was sufficient to show him that the Indians were provided with the usual lasso of skin, with which to secure the horses stolen in the expedition. The men of the party were consequently all mounted and thoroughly armed, the wagons moved in a line abreast, and a sharp lookout was kept on all sides. The women and children were all consigned to the interior of the wagons; and the latter had also guns in readiness to take their part in the defense should an attack be made.

However, they had seen no Indians, and no fresh sign, for two days after they had left the Boiling Spring River, and they began to think they were well out of their neighborhood.

One evening they camped on a creek called Black Horse, and, as usual, had corraled the wagons and forted as well as circumstances would permit, when three or four Indians suddenly appeared on a bluff at a little distance, and, making signals of peaceable intentions, approached the camp.



A PRETTY BEAST-TAMER IN PERIL.



SAVED FROM FREEZING.—A WISCONSIN GIRL, DRESSED IN BOY'S CLOTHING, IS SAVED FROM FREEZING TO DEATH BY A NEWFOUNDLAND DOG.

Most of the men were absent at the time, attending to the cattle or collecting fuel, and only old Brand and one of his young grandchildren, about fourteen years old, remained in camp.

The Indians were hospitably received, and regaled with a smoke, after which they began to evince their curiosity by examining every article lying about, and signifying their wishes that it should be given to them.

Finding their hints were not taken, they laid hold of several things which took their fancies, and, among others, of the pot which was boiling on the fire, and with which one of them was about very coolly to walk off, when old Brand, who up to this moment had retained possession of his temper, seized it out of the Indian's hands and knocked him down.

One of the others instantly began to draw the buckskin cover from his gun, and would no doubt have taken summary vengeance for the insult offered to his companion, when Mary Brand courageously stepped up to him, and placing her left hand upon the gun which he was in the act of uncovering, with the other pointed a pistol at his breast.

Whether daunted by the bold act of the girl, or admiring her devotion to her father, the Indian drew himself back, exclaimed "Howgh!" and drew the cover again on his piece, went up to old Brand, who was all this time looking him sternly in the face, and, shaking him by the hand, motioned at the same time to the others to be peaceable.

The other whites presently coming into camp, the Indians sat quietly down by the fire, and, when the supper was ready, joined in the repast, after which they gathered their buffalo-robes about them and quietly withdrew.

Meanwhile Antoine, knowing the treacherous character of the savages, advised that the greatest precaution should be taken to secure the stock; and before dark, therefore, all the mules and horses were hobbled and secured within the corral, the oxen being allowed to feed at liberty—for the Indians scarcely care to trouble themselves with such cattle. A guard was also set upon the camp, and relieved every two hours; the fire was extinguished, lest the savages should aim, by its light, at any of the party, and all slept with rifles ready at their sides.

However, the night passed quietly, and nothing disturbed the tranquillity of the camp. The prairie wolves loped hungrily around, and their mournful cries were borne upon the wind as they chased deer and antelope upon the neighboring plain; but not a sign of lurking Indians was seen or heard.

In the morning, shortly after sunrise, they were in the act of yoking the oxen to the wagons, and driving in the loose animals which had been turned out to feed at daybreak, when some Indians again appeared on the bluff, and descending it, confidently approached the camp. Antoine strongly advised their not being allowed to enter, but Brand, ignorant of Indian treachery, replied that so long as they came as friends they could not be deemed enemies, and allowed no obstruction to be offered to their approach.

It was now observed that they were all painted, armed with bows and arrows, and divested of their buffalo-robes, appearing naked to the breech-clout, their legs only being protected by deer-skin leggins, reaching to the middle of the thigh.

Six or seven first arrived, and others quickly followed, dropping in one after the other, until a score or more were collected round the wagons. Their demeanor, at first friendly, soon changed as their numbers increased, and they now became urgent in their demands for powder and lead, and bullying in their manner.

A chief accosted Brand, and, through Antoine, informed him "that, unless the demand of his braves were acceded to, he could not be responsible for the consequences; that they were out on the 'war-trail,' and their eyes were red with blood, so that they could not yet distinguish between white and Yuta scalps; that the party, with all their women and wagons, were in the power of the Indian braves, and, therefore, the white chief's best plan was to make the best terms he could; that all they required was that they should give up their guns and ammunition 'on the prairies,' and all their mules and horses—retaining the 'medicine' buffaloes (the oxen) to draw their wagons."

By this time the oxen were yoked, and the teamsters, whip in hand, only waited the word to start. Old Brand foamed while the Indian stated his demands; but, hearing him to the end, exclaimed:

"Darn the red devil! I wouldn't give him a grain of powder to save my life! Put out, boys!" and, turning to his horse, which stood ready saddled, was about to mount, when the Indians sprang at once upon the wagons, and commenced the attack, yelling like fiends.

One jumped upon old Brand, pulled him back as he was rising in the stirrup, and drew his bow upon him at the same moment.

In an instant the old backwoodsman pulled a pistol from his belt, and, putting the muzzle to the Indian's heart, shot him dead. Another Indian, flourishing his war-club, laid the old man at his feet, while some dragged the women from the wagons, and others rushed upon the men, who made brave fight in their defense.

Mary, when she saw her father struck to the ground, sprang with a shrill cry to his assistance, for at that moment a savage, frightful as red paint could make him, was standing over his prostrate body, brandishing a glittering knife in the air, preparatory to thrusting it into the old man's breast. For the rest, all was confusion. In vain the small party of whites struggled against overpowering numbers. Their rifles cracked but once, and they were quickly disarmed, while the shrieks of the women and children, and the loud yells of the Indians, added to the scene of horror and confusion.

As Mary flew to her father's side, an Indian threw his lasso at her, the noose falling over her shoulders, and, jerking it tight, he uttered a delighted yell as the poor girl was thrown back violently to the ground. As she fell, another deliberately shot an arrow at her body, while the one who had thrown the lasso rushed forward, his scalping-knife flashing in his hand, to seize the bloody trophy of his savage deed.

The girl rose to her knees, and looked wildly toward the spot where her father lay bathed in blood; but the Indian pulled the rope violently, dragged her some yards upon the ground, and then rushed with a yell of vengeance upon his victim.

He paused, however, as at that moment a shout as fierce as his own sounded at his very ear, and looking up, he saw La Bonte galloping madly down the bluff, his long hair and the fringes of his hunting-shirt and leggins flying in the wind, his right arm supporting his trusty rifle, while close behind him came Killbuck and the stranger.

Dashing with loud hurrahs to the scene of action, La Bonte, as he charged down the bluff, caught sight of the girl struggling in the hands of the ferocious Indian. Loud was the war-shout of the mountaineer as he struck his heavy spurs to the rowels in his horse's side, and bounded like lightning to the rescue. In a single stride he was upon the Indian, and thrusting the muzzle of the rifle into his very breast, he pulled the trigger, driving the savage backward by the blow itself, at the same moment that the bullet passed through his heart, and tumbled him over stone-dead.

Throwing down his rifle, La Bonte wheeled his obedient horse, and drawing a pistol from his belt, again charged the enemy, among whom Killbuck and the stranger were dealing death-giving blows. Yelling for victory, the mountaineers rushed at the Indians; and they, panic-struck at the sudden attack, and thinking this was but the advance guard of a large band, fairly turned and fled, leaving five of their number dead upon the field.

Mary, shutting her eyes to the expected death-stroke, heard the loud shout La Bonte gave in charging down the bluff, and again looking up, saw the wild-looking mountaineer rush to her rescue and save her from the savage by his timely blow. Her arms were still pinned by the lasso, which prevented her from rising to her feet, and La Bonte was the first to run to aid her as soon as the fight was fairly over.

He jumped from his horse, cut the skin-rope which bound her, raised her from the ground, and, upon her turning up her face to thank him, beheld his never-to-be-forgotten Mary Brand; while she, scarcely believing her senses, clasped in her deliverer her former lover, and still beloved, La Bonte.

"What, Mary, can it be you?" he asked, looking intently upon the trembling woman.

"La Bonte, you don't forget me?" she answered, and threw herself sobbing into the arms of the sturdy mountaineer.

There we will leave them for the present, and help Killbuck and his five companions to examine the killed and wounded. Of the former, five Indians and two whites lay dead, grandchildren of old Brand, fine lads of fourteen or fifteen, who had fought with the greatest bravery, and lay pierced with arrow and lance-wounds.

Old Brand had received a sore buffet, but a handful of cold water from the nearest spring set over his face soon restored him. His scalp had not escaped scot-free, and Antoine was shot through the neck, and falling, had actually been half scalped by an Indian, whom the timely arrival of La Bonte had caused to leave his work unfinished.

Silently, and with sad hearts, the survivors of the family saw the bodies of the two boys buried on the river-bank, and the spot marked with a pile of loose stones procured from the rocky bed of the creek.

The carcasses of the treacherous Indians were left to be devoured by wolves, and their bones to bleach in the sun and wind—a warning to their tribe that such foul treachery as they had meditated had met with a merited retribution.

The next day the party continued their course to the Platte. Antoine and the stranger returned to the Arkansas, starting in the night to avoid the Indians; but Killbuck and La Bonte lent the aid of their rifles to the solitary caravan, and under their experienced guidance no more Indian perils were encountered.

Mary no longer sat perched up in her father's Conestoga, but rode a quiet mustang by La Bonte's side; and no doubt they found a theme with which to while away the monotonous journey over the dreary plains.

South Park was passed and Laramie was reached. The Sweet Water Mountains, which hang over the "pass" to California, were long since in sight; but when the waters of the North Fork of Platte lay before their horses' feet, and the broad trail was pointed out which led to the great valley of Columbia and their promised land, the heads of the oxen were turned down the stream where the shallow waters flow on to join the great Missouri—and not up, toward the mountains where they leave their spring-heads, from which spring flow several waters—some coming their way to the eastward, fertilizing, in their route to the Atlantic, the lands of civilized man; others westward, forcing a passage through the rocky cañons, and flowing through a barren wilderness inhabited by fierce and barbarous tribes.

These were the routes to choose from; and whatever was the cause, the oxen turned their yoked heads away from the rugged mountains; the teamsters joyfully cracked their ponderous whips as the wagons rolled lightly down the Platte, and men, women and children waved their hats and bonnets in the air and cried out, lustily, "Hurrah for home!"

La Bonte and his faithful Mary were married soon afterward. La Bonte gave up his wandering life and settled in Tennessee.

THE PRETTY BEAST-TAMER IN PERIL.

A TRAVELING beast-show in England boasted of a "pretty beast-tamer," who entered the "dens of lions and tigers," etc., etc. The beasts were old, and not very dangerous, but one day the spirit of their old jungle times came o'er them, and turning upon their pretty little mistress they would have torn her to pieces, and cracked her skull to a jelly, had not assistance been promptly on hand in her hour of peril. All these exhibitions of human power over the brute creation are encompassed with great dangers, and should be discouraged by public sentiment.

SAVED FROM FREEZING.

A WISCONSIN girl put on trowsers and started through the deep snow to walk six miles to a village for provisions, the family larder being empty. She soon became tired out, besides losing her way, and the cold was intense. A big Newfoundland dog which accompanied her was the means of saving her life. She scooped out a hollow in the snow, lay down in it, and made the warm dog lie on her, shifting him about so as to successively cover the coldest parts of her body. In that way she passed the whole night, and was not very severely frostbitten. "With two or three more dogs," she says, "I would have got along very comfortably."

A MUSICAL ASS.

AN ass often strayed around a country house, whose occupants were musical people. The lady of the house had a splendid voice. As soon as she began to sing, the ass went close to the window to listen. One day when she was practicing a bravura alone, her performance so delighted him that he walked up the steps, crossed the entrance-hall, and stole into the drawing-room unperceived. In the midst of a brilliant passage he expressed his approval by braying with all his might and main.

HERE is something which reminds us of the remarkable heegira from Dotheboys' Hall. Many and many a time lads have run away from school singly and in pairs, but not in battalions. Innumerable young gentlemen have yearned to abscond, but could not muster courage for the start. Now a telegram announces that a score was well worthy of the wire as a good many things which are sent over—that two hundred boarding-scholars have revolted, and have made good their escape from an establishment in Piedmont. One is curious to know what grievances those juvenile beacons and strength-ened those juvenile legs, as well as how this small army of little fellows fared; but upon these points we get no information. The fugitives may have been lost in the mountains, or safely reached Turin or Novara, only to be marched back weeping to the hated seminary; but since the Children's Crusade, if ever there was one, there has been nothing like this boyish bolt.



A MUSICAL ASS.



THE BOY BOSS.—"STUMP MADE A SNATCH AT IT, AND TO HIS INTENSE HORROR HE SAW IT FLY OUT OF THE CAVERN AND HANG SUSPENDED IN MIDAIR. 'GOOD HEAVENS!' HE CRIED; 'WHAT SHALL I DO?'"

THE BOY BOSS;

Or,

The Hidden Fortune.

A SEQUEL TO SPIDER AND STUMP.

By Bracebridge Hemyng,

(JACK HARKAWAY),

AUTHOR OF THE "JACK HARKAWAY" AND "DICK LIGHTHEART" STORIES, ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER X.

THE PERILS OF THE DEEP.

DURING the ensuing day the fog again descended on the waters, and became denser than it had been on the preceding night.

Spider was in despair, for he did not know in what direction the schooner was drifting.

Wind there was none, and the ship's sails flopped lazily against the masts.

Spingler was a sailor, and he might have been of some use in the emergency, but his wound was worse. Inflammation had set in, and the foolish fellow had made Pompey bring him a bottle of brandy, which had set him crazy.

He sang snatches of songs, raved in his wildest manner, and laughed like a maniac when spoken to.

It was in vain that Spider questioned him.

"If I bring you a compass and a chart," he said, "can you tell me which way to steer when the fog lifts?"

"Steer to the devil!" replied Spingler. "Ha, ha! this is a bully cruise. We shall have lots of fun before we come into port."

"I don't see where der fun comes in," remarked Stump.

"Hark! that's the pilot speaking," said Spingler.

"Oh, yes! I'm der pilot."

"What's the news?" asked Spingler; "we're three weeks out, and don't know anything."

"Der war's over and der country's saved."

"Is it, indeed? Well, that's great news. Hurrah for the Stars and Stripes and the lass that loves a sailor. I'll sing you a song."

"Don't. Say, old hoss, spare us der infliction."

"Get out, you swab. I tell you I'll sing. Here goes:

Billy Taylor was a nice young fellow.
Full of mirth and full of glee,
And his love he did discover
To a damsel on the sea.

Ha, ha! I'm the boy that can do it. I tell you, fellows, it takes the likes of me to make the fo'castle howl. You bet," he added.

"Come away," said Spider. "It is useless to talk to this drunken fool."

He and Stump quitted the cabin, and made their way on deck again, going aft to where Pompey was standing at the wheel.

Spider's remark had been overheard by Spingler, and it infuriated him.

With difficulty, owing to his wound, he got out of his bunk, which was a lower one, and crawled on his hands and knees to the ladder.

To climb up to the deck was no easy task, but the brandy had maddened him, and he did not feel pain.

When he reached the deck he seized a belaying-pin, and making out Spider's figure in the fog, he hit him on the leg, not being able to reach his head.

"Hello! what's that?" cried Spider.

He looked around and beheld Spingler.

"Go below," he added.

"Not till I have killed you," was the reply.

"I guess it will be the other way, if you don't drop on yourself."

"You called me a fool, and you must die."

"Who's going to kill me?"

"I am."

With this Spingler gave him another blow with the belaying-pin, which this time struck him on the skin bone and caused him considerable pain.

Spider did not wish to injure a wounded man, but he drew his pistol and presented it at him, more with the intention of frightening him than anything else.

"Take a tumble!" he cried, "or by heaven it will be the worse for you. I wouldn't like to hurt you, but this is a bad break, so I want you to stop."

Spingler grew frightened at the sight of the pistol and retreated to the bulwarks.

He grasped the side of the ship with one hand, drew himself up, and extending the other hand, said, "Don't shoot."

"Get out," replied Spider.

The man, in his frenzied condition, scarcely knew what he was doing.

"I'll get out," he answered, "and swim over to Binnacle Jim. "You bet you we'll give you fits."

Before Spider could divine his intention he had sprung over the ship's side.

The boys rushed across the deck and peered into the dark-green depths of the sea.

They heard a despairing cry for help.

They saw a dark form struggling in the heaving waters, and then all was still.

He had gone to his last account.

Not being able to swim, he had sunk, and the treacherous current had carried him away.

"This is horrible!" exclaimed Spider.

"It served the durned skunk jes' about right," replied Stump.

"But I hold myself answerable for the poor fellow's death."

"Why?"

"If I hadn't called him a fool he wouldn't have crawled on deck."

"That's jes' what he was."

"And if I hadn't presented the pistol at him he wouldn't have jumped overboard."

"That's all bosh!"

Suddenly Spider ran to the stern.

"Where yer goin'?" asked Stump.

"The boat! the boat! We may save him yet!"

"And get lost in the fog?"

"I'll risk it."

"Den yer as big er fool as der man," replied Stump.

Seeing, however, that Spider was determined, he ran after and seized him by the arm, throwing him backward.

"What are are doing?" inquired Spider, angrily.

"Yer der captain of der ship," replied Stump, "and ef there's anything ter be done, I'm goin' ter do it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'm er man."

"Who said you wasn't? Let me alone," answered Spider.

Stump said no more. He slipped over the stern, dropped into the boat, and cut the rope with a knife.

In less than a quarter of a minute he was lost to sight, the boat having drifted away in the fog, just as the drowning man had done.

Spider was much annoyed and greatly alarmed.

What would become of his friend, Stump?

He walked over to Pompey, who, owing to the density of the fog, had not noticed what had happened, though he had heard the voices.

"Spingler's thrown himself overboard," he said, "and my friend has gone after him in the boat."

"Gorra mighty, massa," replied Pomp. "Dey both done gone got lost for sure."

"Do you think so?"

"Spingler, him sink, bekase him not know how for to swim, and him got shot in leg."

"Very true."

"Den, how we find boat in this fog?"

"It may lift."

"Dere's no tellin', massa. Dis time' o' year de fog lasts several days."

"Poor Stump! In that case our chance is slender, indeed."

"Tink we oughter show some dat regret for ourselves, sah," remarked Pompey, ruefully.

"Why?"

"What we do? kil how we manage dis ship when de wind come up?"

"Didn't two men sail her before?"

"Now we one man, sah, and a boy," replied Pomp, with dignity.

"Confound your impudence," said Spider; "you've got a good cheek."

"Dat's what dey said way down in Georgia, whar I was raised."

Spider paced the deck impatiently.

"Sah!" exclaimed Pomp.

"What now?"

"Is it eh any use, sah, for me to steer dis schooner? Hadn't I best leab de helm, or let her slide?"

"As there is no wind, and we don't know which way to steer, and in fact we are at the mercy of the waves, perhaps you had," answered Spider.

"Den sah, I take a liberty."

"What liberty?"

"I go below and get drunk, sah."

Spider opened his eyes in astonishment at this deliberate proposal.

"What will you do that for?" he asked.

"I got to kill the time enyhow, and Binnacle Jim am got some tip-top rum on board."

"But, my good fellow, I shall be helpless without you."

"Can't help that, sah; must get drunk once in a while; suppose you come and join me?"

"Thank you, no, I'm not such a madman, and besides, I don't drink spirits. Listen to reason; help me out of this scrape and I will reward you."

"No sah! me feel like drinking rum."

"Suppose we go to the bottom?"

"If we do dat, me not know it, because, I 'clar to goodness I mean to get drunk, sah," answered Pomp.

Spider felt that his condition would be desperate without the negro, and he determined to stop him from carrying his threat into execution, if he could.

Pompey was already near the fore-hatch.

"Stay!" cried Spider; "I'll shoot you if you don't obey orders."

The negro stopped, but the ominous click of a pistol fell upon his ears.

"Two can play at dat game, massa," said Pompey. "I'se got a little dog heah. Want to hear him bark, say?"

With an exclamation of despair, Spider turned away.

"Pine dat sut'sfactory, sah?" inquired Pomp.

"Yes," replied Spider, laconically.

"Den, dis chile will go an get drunk, sah. Tomorrow hab de honor to report myself on de deck."

Saying this, Pompey went below.

For some time Spider paced the deck, wishing that he had never left Freshville, and that his uncle had never told him about the hidden fortune.



MARY BRAND.—"MARY BRAND HAD COURAGEOUSLY STEPPED UP TO HIM, AND, PLACING HER LEFT HAND UPON THE GUN WHICH HE WAS IN THE ACT OF UNCOVERING, WITH THE OTHER POINTED A PISTOL AT HIS BREAST."—SEE PAGE 51.

When he owned nothing he was happy.

Since he had been his own "boss," and had enjoyed the possession of money, he had always been in trouble.

"Hang the money!" he muttered. "I'd rather work for a living any day. It's all nonsense for a boy to have money. Oh! if I was only home again with Mrs. Flanigan! But perhaps I'll never see home again."

He thought of all the boys at Freshville, and wondered what they were doing.

It was cold weather, and perhaps they were having good skating on the mill-pond.

With a deep sigh he looked out into the fog and listened to the rippling waves.

Where was Stump?

He tried to catch the sound of his voice crying for help, but not the faintest noise reached him.

Ha! What was that?

A peculiar sound fell upon his ears, which at first he could not understand.

It was like the noise made by the old mill-wheel at Freshville—a steady dip, dip, batter, batter, rush, rush.

The sound increased and came steadily toward the schooner.

Then there was the sound of a fog-horn, with its deep boom, and he knew that a steamer was approaching.

Evidently it was one of the Fall River boats.

In that case he was much nearer in shore than he had thought for.

Would she run him down?

A few minutes would decide.

The beat of the paddle-wheels increased in loudness, and, peering through the fog, he saw the outline of a large Sound steamer.

Drawing his pistol, he fired it rapidly, emptying all the barrels.

It was all he could do.

With his heart beating so loudly that he could hear and count all its pulsations, he awaited the result.

Still the steamer bore down steadily upon the schooner, looming monster-like through the fog.

CHAPTER XI.

STUMP'S ADVENTURES.

WHEN the boat which contained Stump drifted away from the schooner, he did not think of the probable consequences of his rash act.

In his hurry to seize the oars he dropped one of them overboard, having only one left to paddle with.

"Seems ter me," he murmured, "that I've got der wust luck of enny feller. There's der blamed ole oar in der sea, and what am I ter do now?"

This question was not easily answered.

The boat drifted out into the fog. The hull of the schooner disappeared from view, and there was nothing to be seen of Stangier.

Firmly grasping the remaining oar, he paddled desperately to get back.

His exertions were of no avail.

Growing alarmed, he shouted for help till he was hoarse; not thinking in his excitement that even if Spider heard his cries he could not lend him any help.

At length, tired, weary, and dispirited, he sat down in the stern and gave himself sullenly up to despair.

Under his feet were the four bags of gold, which he kicked impatiently.

"Der gold is good on der shore," he remarked. "But er chunk of wood or a bed butter would be worth all der gold when a chap's in er boat at sea."

Hours passed by in a heavy, weary manner, and Stump, who was a philosopher, tried to make himself comfortable.

This was not an easy thing to do, as it is difficult to rest when the mind is ill at ease; and to sleep on the hard boards, of which the bottom of a boat is composed, while the waves are rolling one about, is about the most difficult achievement we can imagine.

At length night fell, and Stump fell asleep.

When he awoke, the fog had entirely disappeared, the sun shone brightly, and it was broad daylight.

How long he had drifted, or how long he had been asleep, he could not tell.

There was nothing to be seen on either side of him but the broad expanse of ocean.

He was hungry, and, above all, thirsty.

Some one had told him that the best way to get rid of thirst, when without water at sea, was to immerse the body in salt water, so he took off his clothes and plunged into the sea.

The swim did him good, by removing the dryness of his skin, and the bath refreshed him.

Regaining the boat, he dressed himself, and sitting down, looked out for a passing sail.

This, however, he did not see.

Not a vessel appeared in sight, and he was monarch of all he surveyed—having the broad Atlantic all to himself.

This rather puzzled him.

"In all der stories I've read of shipwrecked boys," he remarked, "an' all der tales of castaways, a ship comes up an' takes dem off der raft or der boat. 'Pears ter me I'm likely ter starve ter death. It's true I'm fat, an' it won't hurt me any ter put in ar streak of lean, but I wonder how long er fat boy can live on his fat?"

This was a problem that he did not care to consider, and he dropped the subject.

Suddenly he saw on the verge of the horizon a dark outline.

Getting his gaze to bear upon it, he felt convinced that it was land.

Seizing his paddle again, he worked hard to get near it.

His efforts were successful in the course of a few hours, after which he felt thoroughly exhausted.

The land he was approaching was iron-bound, and the steep cliffs frowned precipitously down upon him.

As it happened, the tide was coming in rapidly, and his boat was borne swiftly on the crest of the tumbling waves.

There was danger of his being cast heavily on the rocks, in which case his frail craft would be dashed to pieces and he run the risk of being drowned.

Yet, as he had got into the current, he could not avoid the danger.

All he could do was to look out for an easy landing-place, and this he found.

There was a cliff in the rock.

Using the oar which he had left, and paddling in a skilful manner, he contrived to run his boat into this channel.

The shock caused the boat to break in half, and Stump was cast into the water.

He clambered up the rocks the best way he could, being much bruised in the effort, but reached a sandy spot in safety, and sat down to dry himself.

"You bet," he said, addressing an imaginary personage, "that I'll never go fortune-hunting with Spider any more. Here I am, without any friends, no grub, half dead, and er perfickterly lively prospect of starving!"

The weather was not particularly cold in the daytime, though the nights were chilly, and after resting himself he got up to make an examination of the land upon which he had been cast.

He found that it was a mere rocky ledge, and what was not rock was chiefly sand, though on a central plateau, in which bubbled up a spring, there was plenty of grass and small, stunted trees.

What chiefly interested him was an enormous quantity of seagulls and plovers.

These birds had made this land their home, and not being frequently disturbed by man, they were comparatively tame.

It was the breeding season with them, and countless thousands had built their nests in holes in the rocks.

Into one of these holes he clambered, finding over fifty nests, all full of eggs.

With a stick he knocked down a couple of the birds, and filling his pockets with eggs, which were of a pea-green color, speckled with black, he returned to the shore.

A small cave attracted his attention, and he determined to make it his home.

The first thing he did was to examine the eggs he had taken, to see which were fresh and which had been set upon.

This he accomplished by holding the eggs up to the sun, those that were clear being fresh; but the thick, dark-looking ones he threw away.

Then he plucked the feathers from the two birds he had killed, took out the insides, and regarded them affectionately.

"There's der grub fer ter-day," he said, with a complacent smile. "I'm kinder fond of game, and eggs always go good. I've many a time eat a dozen hen-eggs to home, and I guess I can get away with er couple of score of this kind."

It was clear that he would not starve as long as the supply of birds and eggs lasted.

On the shore, in a little bay, he found a quantity of drift-wood, which had been thrown up by the wind and tide.

Several armsful of this he carried to his cave. It was dry enough to burn, and would make a good fire to cook by.

Further along the shore he discovered an empty bottle with a cork in the neck, which had probably been thrown over the side of some ship, and also a tin cup.

These things were invaluable to him.

The bottle would hold water from the spring, and the cup would enable him to boil the eggs.

Continuing his walk, he found clams and oysters in abundance, a supply of which he carried to the cave.

Going to the spring, he filled the bottle with water, and collected a large bundle of dry grass, with which he made himself as comfortable a bed as could be expected under the circumstances.

His last find was a large door, which looked like the portion of a wreck.

This, he found, fitted the aperture to his cave, and he placed it in a leaning position against the rocks, so as to keep the wind and rain out.

By this time it was growing late, and he was getting very hungry.

Fortunately, owing to his habit of smoking cigarettes, he had half a box of matches in his pocket.

Piling up the drift-wood he quickly made a good fire, and proceeded to cook his dinner.

His bill of fare was by no means a bad one, when all the disadvantages under which he had labored are taken into consideration.

It was as follows:

Oysters on the half-shell.
Clams baked.
Wild birds broiled.
Eggs boiled.

After he had satisfied his appetite, which it took him an hour to do, Stump returned into his cave, rolled a cigarette and smoked contentedly, while he watched the wild waves dashing up against the rocks.

His bed of grass was comfortable. The cave was warm, and as the shades of night were falling, he confessed that he might have been a great deal worse off.

All at once the weather underwent a change.

Dark clouds gathered from the southeast; the wind blew in fitful gusts, and heavy rain-drops fell.

Putting up his door, Stump retreated into his warm cave, and, reclining on his bed, he soon fell asleep, wondering what had become of Spider.

The tempest raged and howled without, but he heard not the storm-voice.

Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep, was his, and he cared not for the conflict of the elements.

For two days the storm lasted, during which time Stump lighted a fire in the cave, and cooked some birds which he killed as before.

When the storm was over he made a tour of the little island, and tried to devise some means of attracting the attention of a passing sail.

While he was cogitating, he saw a cat-rigged boat approaching the island from the north.

His first impulse was to go and hide himself, but on reflection he did not see that he had anything to fear from man, and he was unable to account for the feeling.

The result proved that it was a sort of instinct, showing that the impressions are best, for it would have been better for him if he had never seen that boat.

So, instead of going back to the cave, he waved his arms and shouted with all his might to attract the attention of the boat, which he now feared might pass the rocky ledge without noticing him.

His cries, however, were heard, and the boat made directly for the island, which, on the north shore, had a sandy beach.

There was one man, tall, erect, muscular, with long hair and whiskers; his eyes were keen as those of a hawk, but the expression of his features was merciless in the extreme; his nose being long and prominent, like the beak of a parrot.

In truth, he resembled a bird of prey.

As soon as he had beached his boat, he laid away the lowered sail and sprang ashore.

"What are you doing here, my lad?" he inquired, in a harsh, grating tone.

"I guess I've as much right on der island as you have," replied Stump, who did not like the way in which he was spoken to.

"Don't give me any of yer sass," said the man.

"My name is Silas Tragger, and those who know me will tell you that I'm not to be trifled with."

"No more ain't I, my man," Stump answered. "Dem as knows me says I'm er terror!"

"Ah, pshaw!"

"There ain't no 'pshaw' about it. I was going ter treat yer civil, but if yer want ter get yer back up, I can be as ugly as you."

Tragger, as he called himself, grew white under his swarthy countenance.

"Go down on your knees!" he exclaimed.

"What for?"

"In token of submission, for I make you my slave!"

"Not much you don't," replied Stump, taking up a stone and throwing it at him with such dexterity that it struck the man a severe blow on the shoulder.

"Firing rocks, eh?" said Tragger. "I'll soon cure you of that."

Two strides brought him up to Stump, whom he seized by the collar and began to beat and kick in a savage manner.

All Stump's efforts to escape from the punishment were fruitless.

Blow succeeded blow all over his body, and he was kicked till he ached.

"Let up, boss," he said, at length. "I give in."

"Are you satisfied?" asked Tragger.

"Yes."

"If you're not, there's plenty more where that came from."

"Say," exclaimed Stump, wiping the tears from his eyes, "don't they count you a tough citizen where you come from?"

This speech procured Stump a swinging box on the ears, which made him reel like a tee-totum.

"Look at here," he remonstrated, mildly; "when you're through slamming me around and wiping up der island wid me, perhaps you'll be kind enough to say so."

"Will you be my slave?"

"Anything for a quiet life."

"If you refuse, I'll beat you again."

"I ain't no hog, and I've had enough of it," said Stump.

"Good enough. Now answer my questions."

"Hold on a minute," Stump exclaimed, looking along the sand.

"What's the matter now?"

"I thought I'd lost half an ear. Never mind; let her go. I forgive you, and will try to get yer a situation."

"Where?"

"Down in Freshville, where I came from. The boys are dreffel unruly, and you'd be jes' der chap for schoolteacher."

This remark brought him another box on the ear, which sent him circling round as before.

When he came to a standstill he put his hands up and felt his head.

"Are you hurt?" asked Tragger.

"Oh, no, not at all. Clouting er feller's head don't hurt him any. Kickin' him in der small of der back improves his dergestion, and being slammed around loose kinder makes him feel like er angel. Oh, no; I ain't hurt. Don't get anxious about me."

"What did you feel your head for?"

"I thought yer knocked it off my shoulders, and was a-feelin' ter see if it was where it used ter be. I'm all right, and feel lovely."

"Now to begin," said Tragger. "Where did you come from?"

"Hold on a bit."

"What now?"

"Der ain't any insurance agent around here, is there?"

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing much. I thought I'd like ter insure my life for der sake of my poor mother, that's all."

Silas Tragger stamped his foot angrily.

"Stop fooling!" he said, "and tell me all about yourself."

Seeing that he was not to be trifled with, Stump thought it advisable to comply with his demand, and he stated briefly what had happened to him.

"A strange story," mused the man. "This man, Binnacle Jim, is in possession of the fortune on Bird Island. I know the place well. Your friend is adrift in the fog, and you are a helpless castaway!"

"It is all true, sir," said Stump. "And if you will take me off in your boat I shall be much obliged."

"You will, hey?"

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry for cheeking yer. Der fact is, I always was a sassy young one, and never knew enough to wipe off my chin."

"Well, you must promise to obey me in everything!"

"I will," answered Stump, whose captivity on the island was already growing tedious.

"I shall stay here a week, and if you are alive at the expiration of that time you shall come with me."

"If he was alive!

What did these words mean?

Stump turned pale, and regarded the strange Silas Tragger as a man about to sell his soul might look upon the destroyer of mankind.

"What der yer expect of me, boss?" he demanded.

"I come here at certain intervals," was the reply, "to obtain a cargo of birds' eggs and feathers. The eggs are very choice and sell in Boston at a high price, while the feathers are much sought after for trimming ladies' hats."

"Oh, if that is all," exclaimed Stump, "it will be belly fun. I like taking eggs, and the birds are so tame, I can knock them down with a stick."

His mind was made much easier, and he breathed a deep sigh of relief.

In the warmth of his heart he told Tragger where his cave was, in return for which information he was given a load of provisions to carry from the boat which would have staggered a mule.

If he halted or grumbled, his flagging energies were stimulated by a hearty kick.

"Go on; hurry up there," Tragger would exclaim. "Do you forget that you are my slave?"

All the rest of that day was consumed in carrying various articles from the cat-boat to the cave.

Tragger took Stump's bed, made him cook for him and attend generally to his wants, as if he had bought him.

The following two days were occupied in collecting all the eggs which were within reach, or could be climbed after, and in killing such birds as they could come near.

Tragger cut off the wings and part of the back feathers, afterward throwing the bodies away.

On the third day the birds got very scarce and shy.

Tragger took a coil of rope and told Stump to follow him with a large basket.

He led the way to the summit of the high rocks on the southeast side of the island.

On their way they came across a skeleton of a human being, which was about five feet in length.

"Poor Tommy!" exclaimed Stump's master, giving it a kick.

"Who's that, sir?" inquired Stump, whose respect for his master had increased in proportion to the number of thrashings he received.

"Oh! that was my boy last year," was the careless answer.

"How did he die?"

"The rope broke."

"What rope?"

"Don't ask so many confounded questions," said Tragger, testily. "It was the rope I lowered him with—just the same as I'm going to lower you."

"Me?"

"Yes. What do you suppose I made you my slave for? There are thousands of birds and eggs in the holes in the rocks which I cannot get at. I shall fasten this rope round your waist and lower you over the cliff. You will have the basket and a stick. When it is filled with eggs and birds you will give a signal, and I shall haul you up."

Stump shivered with fright.

What if the rope should break with him as it had done with the unfortunate Tommy!

"Oh, sir!" he said, as his teeth chattered, "I hope you'll be very careful!"

"Of course. I don't want to lose you at the start," answered Tragger, adding: "It's a pity you're so fat."

"Yo-es," stammered Stump. "But if you'll wait a week I'll starve myself and take exercise, sir, and try to get thin."

"Can't wait," growled Tragger. "Don't be a fool and get nervous. I dare say you'll come out all right."

Stump hoped most devoutly that he might, but he did not feel at all sure about it.

A cold sweat broke out all over him, and he already pictured himself a skeleton, the bones of which were bleaching in the sun.

When the top of the cliff was reached Tragger stopped, and Stump looked over the giddy height.

The wind blew sharp and keen, dashing the waves into foam on the jagged rocks below.

Birds flew about and screamed to one another as they darted in and out of their nests.

"Oh, don't lower me over such a place as this," pleaded Stump, in terrified accents.

"You must do as I tell you," was the cold reply.

"Indeed I can't. I won't."

"Won't you?"

"I cannot."

"Then I'll have to make you."

"You can't make me," said Stump, resolutely.

"Why not?"

"I've been made once, and you can't make me over again."

"Ha! ha! my little joker. We will see," exclaimed Tragger, who grasped the end of the rope in one hand and seized his victim with the other.

A sound thrashing, which made the boy ache in every limb, caused him to think better of his resolution.

"I'll go," he exclaimed. "Leave off whipping me, and I'll do anything you ask me."

"Good," said Tragger.

He fastened the rope tightly around Stump's waist, and giving him the basket, made the other end of the rope tight to the nearest piece of projecting rock.

Then he lowered him carefully over the cliff hand under hand.

"Jerk the rope when you want to stop," he cried.

"Yes, sir."

"Jerk it twice when the basket is full, and you would like to be hauled up."

"Ay, ay," answered Stump, whose voice was scarcely audible in the whirl and swish of the wind.

He was rocked to and fro, his hands were soon torn and bleeding from his efforts to keep himself from being bumped against the rocks.

At length he spied an opening.

Giving the rope a jerk, the descent was at once stopped, and the wind dashed him into a spacious cavern.

As soon as his feet touched the floor he was nearly knocked down by a flock of birds, who were frightened at his unexpected appearance.

Taking his stick out of the basket, he laid about him right and left, the floor being soon strewed with dead birds.

His exertions relaxed the coil of rope round his waist, and it slipped up over his head.

He made a snatch at it, missed it, and to his intense horror he saw it fly out of the cavern and hang suspended in midair.

"Good heavens!" he cried, "what shall I do?"

It was impossible to reach the rope, and all he could do was to watch it swaying backward and forward in space, looking at it in a dazed manner.

His situation was truly pitiable.

Shut up in a hole in the precipitous side of the rock, there was no possible means of escape that he could see or think of.

Presently the rope was drawn up, and disappeared from his bewildered view.

"God help me!" he murmured; "I am lost."

Tragger had evidently seen the empty rope, and divining what had happened, pulled it up.

This was tantamount to abandoning the wretched boy to his fate.

For hours he sat there wringing his hands, alone with that grim giant despair.

The birds came and went, as if he was no more than a block of stone, and harmed them not; some even perched on his shoulder.

Night fell and Stump listened to the mournful roar of the waves, which seemed to be singing a funeral dirge.

At length he fell back, and closing his eyes, fell into a fitful slumber.

His dreams were terrible, and he frequently awoke with a wild shriek.

He was buried alive.

Hope had died out in his breast, and he looked upon himself as one already in the grave.

[To be continued.]

"The Boy Rose" was commenced in No. 220.

DASHING DOLORES;

Or, Chincapin Dick on the Border.

By JOSEPH E. BADGER, Jr.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A BOLD STROKE FOR FREEDOM.

THE danger was passed with that interference of Black Panther, and the Mexicans lowered their weapons and turned away as though abashed by the words of their feared chief.

For the first few moments Chincapin Dick was almost sorry that the collision had not actually

taken place. The events of the past hour or two had worked up his blood to fever-heat, and he would have liked nothing better than to have closed with the threatening mob in a mere desperate struggle, even whelming though the odds were against him.

"Come, señor," uttered Dashing Dolores, her voice sounding strangely cold and self-contained when contrasted with the impassioned speech made in his defense only a few moments before. "Doubtless you have witnessed enough of our peculiar sports, and the manner in which they are conducted, to satisfy your curiosity. Will you oblige me by returning to your room?"

Chincapin Dick hesitated for a moment before replying, and during that brief interval his eyes and wits were busy.

He was left alone with Black Panther and Dashing Dolores. The others—men, women and children—were hastening over the level plain, eager to reach the spot where the roan stallion had at length been interrupted and freed from its horribly mutilated burden.

Only for that luckless parole of honor, how easily he might escape from a dangerous captivity!

With two trusty revolvers in his hands—they were the identical weapons, by-the-way, of which he had been deprived when taken prisoner at Santa Rosa—and a good horse between his thighs, how easily he could dispose of Black Panther, "and, if need be, of Dashing Dolores as well!

It was a powerful temptation, but he resisted it now, as once before. Yet he was resolved to escape, and that ere many more minutes passed by. A seeming paradox, but resolutely meant.

"Your advice is good, señorita, and I will act upon it as soon as I have spoken a few words to our friend here," glancing toward Black Panther, whose huge mustache curled contemptuously.

Dashing Dolores interpreted the glance, and believed she divined its purport.

"Father," she said, resting one hand upon the arm of the Border Vulture, and speaking in a low, resolute tone—"father, this gentleman is under my protection. If any harm comes to him this day, through you or yours, I swear to avenge him, though I have to betray your secrets to the government soldiers and lead them along the trail myself! You, señor"—turning toward Chincapin Dick—"will find me awaiting you upon the plateau near the house. Don't keep me waiting long."

Our hero made no reply, but watched her in silence as she galloped swiftly away from the spot.

"Well, señor, your business with me?" uttered Black Panther, impatiently. "Is it to make good your threat of challenging me to fight you a duel? If so, you run little risk, as you may guess from the words yonder spitfire addressed to me. So you can have all the glory of boarding your master without fear of any disagreeable consequences."

"My master never stood in your shoes," bluntly responded Chincapin Dick; but let that pass. It was my intention to challenge you, because I feel reasonably sure you lured me out here to have me killed—hah! your black and treacherous heart frighten me, so you might as well save yourself the trouble of trying. I'd ask nothing better than to meet you on even terms, man to man, with equal weapons, and none to interfere between us."

"Such terms are clearly out of the question, when you know that my hands are bound," sneeringly replied the chief of the Border Vultures, though his snaky eyes glittered and glowed like living coals.

"They would be spoken even more readily were we both free to act as we liked," quickly responded Chincapin Dick, as I hope to convince you, at some time not far distant in the future. Now, however, as talk is idle, I wish to give you back my parole."

"Naturally enough! my hands are bound—you are well armed and mounted—none of my men are within rifle-shot. What a glorious opportunity that would be for you, señor?"

With a short, scornful laugh, Chincapin Dick leaped from his saddle, and striking the spotted mustang a sharp blow upon the haunches with the flat of his hand, sent it galloping away.

"That should set one of your imaginary fears at rest, and this will satisfy the other," said the young ranchero, holding his two revolvers by the muzzle and thrusting the butts almost into the face of the suspicious Border Vulture. "Take these weapons, señor—or shall I unload them first? You shrink back as though you thought they spoke through a breech instead of at the muzzle!"

"You will be sorry for your jeers, young man!" muttered Black Panther, almost suffocating with rage. "I accept your parole, and it will be a long time before you have a chance——"

He said no more, for Chincapin Dick's chance came then and there.

The outlaw chieftain, in thrusting the pistols just handed him, into his belt, removed his gaze from the young ranchero for an instant; but that was long enough for our hero.

With a panther-like spring Chincapin Dick grasped the outlaw by his monstrous beard, and adding the weight of his body to the utmost strength of his arms, he dragged Black Panther to the ground as easily as though the strong man had been but a child!

Alighting fairly upon his head, Black Panther was completely stunned; but Chincapin Dick did not wait to ascertain this fact.

Grasping the bridle of the startled black stallion, he dealt the prostrate man two heavy kicks behind the ear, snatched the brace of revolvers from his belt, then vaulted into the saddle and dashed away from the spot at top speed, heading as bidden by old Huckleberry.

Executed with wonderful rapidity though these movements had been, the big black horse had not taken a dozen leaps ere the loud, angry yells from the Border Vultures upon the plain proclaimed the fact of his attempt at escape being discovered.

With remarkable unanimity, the entire party set out in swift pursuit, men, women and children, afoot or upon horseback, as the case might be, yelling and shouting like a pack of furies, straining every nerve to intercept the fugitive ere he could leave the plain.

With growing anxiety Chincapin Dick looked for the opening described by Huckleberry, for with every passing moment the enemy were drawing nearer, despite the fact that the black stallion he had taken from the chief of the Border Vultures had not its equal upon the ground, either for speed or endurance.

The fringe of undergrowth formed the base of an equilateral triangle, of which the crowd gathered around the remains of Juan Varilo was the apex. The other two points were the senseless body of Black Panther and the opening in the chaparral.

Chincapin Dick was racing along the base, while the enemy followed the right incline, making all haste to cut him off, knowing as they did that he could not possibly escape through the chaparral before he came to that trail.

Our hero saw that there must be powder burned before he could escape, and with a grim composure he took a look at his recovered pistols, to make sure the caps were in place, the cylinders full, and that the locks were in good working condition.

But the ball opened even sooner than Chincapin Dick had calculated.

A rapid fusillade startled him, and looking up, he saw the Border Vultures pulling up their animals with loud cries of surprise and confusion. More than that, he saw one man fling up his arms and fall sideways from his saddle—saw a horse plunge headlong to the ground, as though stricken by a thunderbolt, and a small, exultant yell almost split his throat as he realized the truth—that his faithful friends were fairly at work.

Such was the fact. From their covert Huckleberry and Little Jake were distant witnesses of the bold exploit of their comrade, and as the Mexicans pressed forward, heading straight for the trail which led through the chaparral, they prepared to give the enemy a warm reception.

Aiding their time until the Mexicans were barely two hundred yards away, they opened fire, working their magazine-rifles as rapidly as possible, and though this rapidity prevented their aim from being as deadly as it might otherwise have been, their purpose was fully effected.

Under the storm of lead only two men could keep up such a hailstorm of bullets, the Border Vultures believed themselves confronted by a force at least equal their own, and as quickly as possible they reined in their horses and turned about to flee from this unlooked-for peril.

A few parting shots were sent after them, but of course no pursuit was made. The hidden "army" was only too glad to be rid of them so easily.

The greeting of the three chums was short, but warm, indeed.

Chincapin Dick was delighted to see that his friends had brought Black Dick with them, but he would not stop then to change mounts. Time was too precious. Even as he glanced back over the open ground he saw that Panther emerged to gain his feet. That told him pursuit, hot and persistent, would be made, for the Border Vulture would not willingly rest until he had thoroughly avenged the bitter insult he had received.

"Lead the way, Uncle!" he cried, sharply. "Put your best foot fo'most! We ain't out o' the woods yit, nur won't be, either, ontel we're in'ley on white man's ground. If we're ketched up now we won't make a mouthful for them pizen imps."

"A mouthful plenty big enough to give a dozen o' them imps the worst case o' bellyache they ever had, anyhow!" grinned the veteran, as he gave his horse free rein.

Naturally enough, Chincapin Dick was curious to hear how his friends had managed to discover his whereabouts, though he was obliged to await a more favorable opportunity for speech.

The ground over which they rode was rough and broken, while the trail which they were forced to take was narrow, crooked and intricate. Huckleberry followed it as surely as a foxhound upon a breast-high scent, but the progress they made in a straight line was by no means reassuring.

Knowing thoroughly every foot of the country, it was the old ranger's settled purpose to lead the Border Vultures to intercept them, and either shoot them down from an ambush or else pounce upon and take them prisoners by mere force of numbers.

This was exactly what was attempted, but so much time also had been lost before Black Panther fairly regained his usual clearness of mind, after his rough usage at the hands—and feet—of Chincapin Dick, that the effort was not wholly successful.

Keen-eyed Jack Kane was the first to discover the threatening peril, and directed the attention of his comrades to it.

"They're trying to cut us off!" he shouted, pointing to where a number of horsemen were spurring furiously along, endeavoring to gain a certain point of the narrow trail before our friends could pass it by.

"We kin out-foot 'em; ride like the devil was gruppin' at yer tail!" grated old Huckleberry, plunging his spurs rowel-deep into the ribs of his horse and unslinging his rifle.

The calculation was an exceedingly close one, and had the Mexicans ridden with as free a spur as the Texans, it would be difficult to say which party would have won the disputed point first.

But with three rifles belching forth a seemingly unending stream of bullets, more than one of which found its victim, despite the difficulty of aiming while racing at full speed over rough ground, it is not very surprising that the Mexicans, at least some of them as had nothing particular at stake, rode rather faint-heartedly, the more particularly that they had been strictly forbidden to fire a shot while there was the slightest risk of striking Chincapin Dick.

Black Panther alone held his own, and seeing that he would reach the narrow pass quite as soon, if not before themselves, the fugitives turned their weapons upon him.

Man and horse went down in a heap together, and with loud, taunting shouts, the three adventurers dashed at full speed into the narrow pass.

Though this point was won, and the enemy, as they believed, were all once more behind them, our friends knew that their escape was yet far from being a certainty.

If only to avenge the loss of their comrades who had fallen before that rapid fusillade, the Border Vultures would not give up the chase while the faintest hope of success remained.

Nor were these the only foemen our three friends had to fear, as they discovered full soon.

The narrow pass was nearly half a mile in length, and for the greater portion of that distance was straight as a country lane, with high, almost perpendicular, rock walls upon either hand that would have puzzled a mountain-goat to scale.

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"Let 'em come!" cried Huckleberry, as the Border Vultures crowded into the lower end of the defile. "We kin hold 'em back sharp long jest ahead; we'll hev open ground an' a clr'ar track afore us——"

This hiatus was filled with a series of bitter curses, such as would almost blister the paper they were printed upon, if recorded here. Yet now, if ever, were they justifiable.

Sweeping around the sharp bend in the pass our friends suddenly drew rein, for their further advance was barred, unless they wished to run headlong into the midst of a well-armed enemy, who were coolly awaiting their coming!

Not fifty yards from the mouth of the pass, over a score of Mexican cavalry were drawn up, with weapons ready for use.

The Border Vultures were racing up the defile, ravening for blood.

The fugitives were entrapped, beyond all possibility of escape!

"Shall we ride right through 'em?" muttered Huckleberry, his eyes glowing like coals.

"That'd be sure death. We'll play we're greasers, an' ax their permission to them chaps," hurriedly decided Chincapin Dick. "Mebbe we kin fool 'em, an' then give 'em the slip."

The chance was, indeed, a slender one, but it was the best and only one that offered. They would receive no mercy at the hands of the Border Vultures, that was certain, and either force was far too strong for them to think of fighting their way through.

Chincapin Dick lost no time in trying his hastily devised plan, striking forward at top speed, and, speaking in Spanish, claiming rescue at their hands from a band of assassins who were hotly pursuing them.

It really appeared as though his audacious ruse was to prove a complete success, for the soldiers opened their ranks and admitted them at once.

None too soon, for the outlaws at that moment reached the mouth of the pass.

They, too, drew rein in surprise, but did not seem inclined to show a retreat, despite the threatening front of the cavalry.

Probably they knew from experience how little the gallant soldiers were to be feared by anything like an equal force, and in this case they were outnumbered by more than two to one.

Chincapin Dick uttered an exclamation of surprise as he saw Black Panther push through the crowd and advance toward the soldiers, seemingly but little the worse for wear.

Did the villain bear a charmed life? was the question he could not help asking himself.

With a muttered order for his men to hold their carbines in readiness to shoot the fellow down at the first sign of treachery or violence, the officer in command—whose face was literally swathed in bandages, rode a few paces in advance, then drew rein.

The distance intervening was not so great but that our friends could overhear every word of the ensuing conversation, and sorry consolation that proved!

With scant ceremony the outlaw chieftain demanded the restoration of the three fugitives. They had slain nearly a dozen of his men, and their lives must pay the forfeit.

"I know nothing of all that," was the cold response. "They have claimed my protection against a band of outlaws and assassins, and protection they shall have."

"But they are enemies—yours as well as mine," persisted Black Panther. "They are Texans—they were in the fight at the ford when you were wounded——"

The rest of the speech was lost to our three friends, for they knew now that, to use the vernacular, "their cake was all dough."

As by instinct they divined the truth—that the officer with the bandaged face was none other than Captain Gonzales, whom they saw felled with Big Tom's pistol—and now that Black Panther had revealed their identity, they could expect but scant mercy at the hands of the Mexican officer.

A single glance around told them that any attempt at flight would be worse than useless.

Though they still retained their weapons, and could, most likely, have struck down half a dozen or more of the soldiers surrounding them, before they could clear the crowd, they would assuredly be cut or shot down without mercy.

The outlaws also had heard the disclosure of the Border Vulture, and with dark, vindictive scowls of hatred, they crowded closer around the trio, effectually hampering them.

"Wait an' watch fer me to give the sign," softly muttered Chincapin Dick, banishing all traces of uneasiness from his countenance as by magic.

Captain Gonzales quietly listened to the speech of Black Panther, and then repeated his refusal to deliver up the fugitives, whereupon the outlaw threatened to take them by force, and even turned his head to urge his men forward. But instead, he suddenly put spurs to his horse and rapidly retreated.

He caught sight of a strong force of cavalry rapidly approaching the spot, along the base of the hill, and this discovery explained the unusual boldness of the captain. Knowing that reinforcements were coming, he could afford to act firmly.

For reasons best known to himself, Gonzales made no attempt to arrest the outlaw, no doubt fearing the length of his tongue in case he should be cornered.

Riding back, he made a sign to his men, who instantly covered the three friends with their weapons, threatening them with instant death in case they were to prove refractory.

Chincapin Dick immediately threw up his hands, and a word from him induced Huckleberry and Little Jack to do the same. At another sign from the wounded officer, they were disarmed, though their limbs were still left at liberty.

"I protest against this treatment, captain," quietly uttered Chincapin Dick. "I am a good and law-abiding citizen of this Republic, and shall demand satisfaction for this base outrage."

"And you shall receive it at the hands of the hangman," was the malignant response. "I know you only too well. You shall never have another opportunity of stealing horses from our troops. If only for that exploit, you three should die dogs' deaths!"

While speaking he made a sign, and a soldier stepped forward and confronted Dick.

It was none other than the man he had so adroitly captured and carried into Texas.

"He does look like a hangman," was his only comment, with admirable control of his countenance.

"He will help to put you into the hangman's hands, at all events."

"I don't often bet, captain, but I'll wager almost anything you care to name that I will outlive you for many a long month," laughed the young ranchero.

Captain Gonzales made no response to this speech, but bade two of his men dismount and bind the prisoners, hands and feet. This order was promptly executed, and, bound in helpless coils, our three friends were conducted from the spot.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET.

CHINCAPIN DICK felt very much as though he had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire, but not the faintest trace of uneasiness could be read upon his face or in his carriage. The malignant Captain Gonzales should not be afforded that satisfaction.

The two forces united, and a long consultation took place between the officers, but not a word could either of the prisoners catch. They were left totally in the dark as to what end the soldiers had in view, or what had brought them in that section of the country.

Both Huckleberry and Little Jack hoped that they would be sent back to Santa Rosa, in which case, providing they could get word to Don Estevan de Gonzaga, they felt reasonably confident of effecting their escape through his means.

But in this hope they were fated to disappointment, for, after several hours of apparently aimless riding through the broken country, the soldiers went into camp, though it yet lacked an hour or more of sunset.

They were speedily convinced that Gonzales was resolved to run no risk of their escaping his vengeance, for in addition to the bonds upon their hands and feet, each one was firmly bound in a sitting posture to the trunk of a separate tree.

Though placed several feet apart, the three chums were near enough together to converse with ease, and despite their disagreeable situation, they duly improved the opportunity.

Almost the first thing, Chincapin Dick recognized the peculiar garments worn by the veteran cowboy, and Huckleberry briefly narrated the circumstances under which they came into his possession.

The mention of Red Tom's name recalled to Chincapin Dick the threats made by Dashing Dolores, and he began to fear that they had already been carried out. If Uncle Dick had been killed—and how else could Red Tom have obtained possession of his blood-stained clothes?—the blow must have been struck already.

Yet, as Huckleberry continued his recital of the events which had occurred after the fight in the dark at the hacienda, our hero saw more cause for hope than despair.

Red Tom had certainly returned to the hacienda alone, and in a badly used up condition, *before* Chincapin Dick was captured. Had he succeeded in finishing Don Estevan of Los Stevens, at the same time he obtained Uncle Dick's clothes, Dashing Dolores, in her anger, would have divulged the fact.

If he had failed once he might fail again, or be so detained that, if they could only effect their escape, he might be entrapped, and put beyond all danger of giving more trouble.

But could they escape? That was the question to be answered.

Their chances looked faint indeed, as Captain Gonzales completed his arrangements for the night. Not only were their bonds carefully tested and tightened, but besides the regular sentinels, the captain himself took up his position near them, and amused himself by picturing the shameful death that awaited them on the morrow.

As ill-luck would have it, he had caught cold in his wound the night before, and his face pained him so excessively as to preclude all hopes of sleeping. It was as a sort of salve that he fell to torturing his prisoners before their time with his disagreeable speeches.

And yet, had they only known it, this malignancy upon his part was to prove a blessing in disguise, and be one of the principal aids in effecting their deliverance.

An hour after hour passed by without any sign of retiring on the part of Captain Gonzales, our friends began to lose heart. Their bonds were so carefully applied that it would be impossible to break or slip them off without discovery, so long as he remained awake and so near them.

With this exception the conditions were favorable.

No fires were lighted, for the night was warm enough to do without, and Gonzales, knowing how loath Black Panther would be to lose what he had once set his mind upon, deemed it wise not to set up a beacon for his guidance, the light of the moon being quite sufficient for the sentinels to detect the approach of any inimical force.

If he could only free his arms, thought Chincapin Dick.

The captain was within easy reach. The horses which had been taken from them were tethered only a few yards away. Their weapons were stacked with some others in plain sight. All would be so easy were the first difficulty once overpast!

Just when his thoughts were the most gloomy Chincapin Dick made a truly startling discovery.

Beyond, and a little to the left of the Mexican officer, a dark, dimly-outlined shape was silently crawling out from behind a bush; but whether it was friend or foe, human or animal, the young rancher could not for the life of him tell.

He quickly resolved to throw away no chance, and on the faint hope that something favorable might transpire, Dick addressed the captain, thinking to thus keep him from making the same discovery, watching the moving shadow closely as he spoke.

He could see that both Huckleberry and Little Jack had observed the crawling form, even sooner than himself, and their remaining quiet gave him increased hope.

Captain Gonzales had not the faintest suspicion that anything was wrong, and resumed his taunts and bitter threats with redoubled malignancy, as Chincapin Dick pretended to plead for mercy.

The dark figure finally paused, within easy arm's length of the soldier, slowly raising up to a kneeling posture, and Chincapin Dick could scarcely choke down the cry of surprise that rose in his throat, as the moonlight fell upon the face of the newcomer, for he recognized Dashing Dolores!

An arm was flung around the Mexican's throat, with the sure grip of a professional garroter. His head was drawn forcably backwards, and then a long, slender dagger was buried to the hilt in his heart!

Not a groan, nor even a gasp, followed this sure and deadly stroke. Captain Gonzales was dead—had died so suddenly that he could scarcely have realized he was threatened with danger, ere all was over, and his spirit had sought its long home.

Chincapin Dick had witnessed many a violent death, but never before had he felt so faint and sick at heart as now, when he saw a young and beautiful woman so coolly imbue her hands in blood. That the victim was his bitter enemy—that the blow was dealt in order to save the lives of others, certain death, was not sufficient to remove the feeling of positive loathing with which this bold deed inspired him.

Silently lowering the dead body to the ground, Dashing Dolores glided to his side, and stooped to sever his bonds; but he shook his head negatively.

"Set my friends at liberty first, or I will call aloud and give the alarm," he said, coldly.

With a silent, reproachful glance, Dashing Dolores turned away to obey his bidding, returning to his side as soon as Huckleberry and Little Jack were released from their bonds.

By this time the young ranchero had in a measure overcome his sudden, and, under the circumstances, unreasonable feeling of repugnance, and as the keen blade severed his bonds, he briefly but earnestly expressed his thanks.

"But we cannot leave on foot and unarmed," he added. "Do you hide again, and as soon as our blood circulates freely once more, we will secure our weapons and horses."

"I am no child, señor," was the cold response. "I can help lead away the horses."

Chincapin Dick made no further objections, for every moment of delay increased the chances of detection, and he had no desire to be made the target of some four-score carbines.

At a sign from him Huckleberry and Little Jack crept into the bushes and stole cautiously toward the horses, in company with Dashing Dolores, while Chincapin Dick himself looked to securing the necessary weapons. This was the most ticklish task of all, since he was forced to pass from the shadow into the bright moonlight, and disengage their own rifles and revolvers from a number of other weapons.

Still his nerves were steady enough for the delicate duty, and ten minutes later he had succeeded in his object, without the faintest clink or jingle to arouse the sleeping soldiers, who lay only a few yards distant from the stack of arms.

Dashing Dolores and the two cowboys were equally successful in their bold venture, thanks to their familiarity with the horses, the black stallion obeying the woman's touch and following her as quietly as a pet lamb. Thus, one by one, the animals were silently led under cover, and when Chincapin Dick appeared with the firearms there was nothing to hinder their flight, though Huckleberry, true to his nature, was not satisfied to let well-enough alone.

"It'd be a pizen shame to throw away sech a red-hot chance, which 'tain't no ways likely we'd git ag'in in a hurry," he said, recretinly. "Then that varmint said we'd never hook no more hosses, which I'd like powerfully to make a lie, if he is dead."

"We'll be lucky enough ef we git off with what we've got," said Little Jack, quietly.

"And that we will scarcely do if you lose any more time," impatiently added Dashing Dolores.

"You have bravely earned the right to command us," whispered Chincapin Dick; "but there is a long and hard ride before us, and where saddles are so plenty I do not recognize the necessity for us to ride bareback. If you will wait here with the horses we three will soon return with what we need."

"No; I will go with you if you persist in running such an unnecessary risk."

And go she did, seemingly resolved not to lose sight of the young ranchero for a moment.

Dame Fortune still favored the adventurers, and they secured the desired articles without being discovered, or even arousing the faintest suspicion that all was not right in the minds of the negligent sentinels, who mechanically paced their beats, more nearly asleep than waking.

After leading the horses for some little distance, carefully avoiding all unnecessary noise, Dashing Dolores, who was dressed in male costume, nimbly mounted the horse which Chincapin Dick had taken from Black Panther, which example was quickly followed by the others.

She assumed the office of guide, as there could be no question about the matter, riding ahead with the unhesitating air of one perfectly acquainted with the lay of the ground.

Though he followed her lead without a word, Chincapin Dick was far from being satisfied that all was to be smooth sailing for the future.

He could not forget the bitter threats Dashing Dolores had made so recently, and while he fully appreciated the great service she had rendered him and his chums at the risk of her own life, he felt strong doubts as to her actions being wholly disinterested.

She had displayed such intense hostility toward Ina Stevens—had sworn that she, at least, should never be made happy by his love—that he could not believe she would have dared so much simply to restore him to the arms of a favored rival.

At length he could not forbear placing his doubts at rest, in one way or the other, and riding up alongside the fair Amazon, he spoke:

"Please draw rein for a moment, señorita. We are far enough from the camp of the enemy to be out of danger, even if they should discover our flight, and there is one point which I think had best be decided now, before we go any further."

"What is it you mean, señor?" asked Dashing Dolores, in a low tone; but Chincapin Dick fancied that her voice trembled slightly. "You surely do not doubt me, after all I have done?"

"Ef he does, durned ef I don't lick him clean out o' his boots!" exploded Huckleberry, who had wholly changed his opinion of Dashing Dolores, since the rescue so adroitly made.

"For what you have done, I can never thank you sufficiently, señorita," said Dick, earnestly. "Our danger was greater than you could have realized, and only for your courageous action, we would never have witnessed another sun set in this life."

"Granting this, what occasion have you for doubting me now?"

"I did not say that I doubted you," returned the young ranchero, a little confused by this direct attack. "I only wish to know whither you were guiding us?"

"To safety, I trust," tersely responded the fair Amazon.

"In one word—are you thinking of taking me back to your friends?"

"Why do you doubt me? Why will you not trust me?" impulsively cried Dashing Dolores. "Am I so hateful in your sight that you are still afraid to trust me, after all I have dared in your behalf?"



DASHING DOLORES.—"AN ARM WAS THROWN AROUND THE MEXICAN'S THROAT, WITH THE SURE GRIP OF A PROFESSIONAL GARROTER. HIS HEAD WAS DRAWN FORCIBLY BACKWARDS, AND THEN A LONG, SLENDER DAGGER WAS BURIED TO THE HILT IN HIS HEART!"—SEE PAGE 54.

"If I was the only one concerned, señorita, I would follow you blindfolded to the ends of the earth, and never ask a question; but such is not the case. From your own lips I know that one, who is far dearer to me than life itself, is in danger. For her sake I must be cautious—suspicious, if you will—even at the risk of offending you and appearing ungrateful for the great service you have rendered us.

"And yet, if you will assure me that you do not intend trying to hinder my speedy return to my own country, I will humbly beg your pardon——"

"That is enough, señor. Do not attempt to sweeten the bitter draught," interrupted Dashing Dolores, with a hard laugh. "I will not tell a lie, even to insure your following me.

"I *did* intend leading you back to the place from which you escaped to-day, because I knew your life would be in less danger there, and, possibly, for a more selfish reason.

"I should have told you as much in a few minutes, and you would have obeyed me, simply because there would have been no other course left open to you.

"These gentlemen might have accompanied you or have gone their own way in peace. As it is, of course I am unable to hinder you from choosing your own course; but I give you fair warning that you will never reach the Rio Grande alive.

"The soldiers will be upon your track, enough you will have little to fear from them. A far surer hand will arrest you, and I will be there to congratulate you!"

Had there been light enough to plainly reveal its workings, the countenance of Huckleberry would have presented a truly ludicrous picture to an uninterested observer during the progress of the speech just recorded.

From implicit confidence and a fatherly sort of love, to astonishment and doubt, through all the intermediate stages, ending in utter disgust at his having suffered the fair Amazon to cast dust in his eyes so completely.

But as Dashing Dolores concluded, he rode up beside her and adroitly dropped the noose of his lariat over her head and shoulders, pinning her arms to her side.

"She's led us into a trap—ax *her*, ef you don't b'lieve me," he splattered, as Chincapin Dick made as though he would interfere. "You're safe enough, but she ain't struck on nuther boy Jack nur me, an' we'd feed on lead the fust thing ef we didn't hev her as a sort o' password."

It was a sore trial to the young ranchero, to thus requite the great service so lately rendered them by Dashing Dolores, but under the circumstances he knew that the veteran cowboy was right. Still, he caught an excuse to set her at liberty.

"If you can assure me that none of your friends are lying in wait for us, señorita, you shall be set at liberty at once, with ample apologies. Can you do this?"

"If I said Yes, it would be a lie," was the cold response. "You are surrounded by my friends, and so closely that I have only to raise my voice——"

Little Jack deftly clapped a folded handkerchief over her mouth and bound the ends, behind her head, thus most effectually choking any outcry.

"It's a pizen dirty piece o' work," muttered Chincapin Dick, disgustedly. "I never thought to be ketched treatin' a woman this a-way."

"Ef a woman puts on a man's duds, an' does a man's work, she mustn't complain ef she gits the treatment a man does," philosophically observed Huckleberry. "Then it's the only sure way out o' the scrape we're in. She's set a trap for us, while gittin' us out of another, but so long's we kin put our han's on her, her friends ain't a-goin' to do more than bark an' show their teeth at us."

"We can set her free as soon as it gits light," muttered Dick, to quiet his own conscience.

At this juncture, a faint, indistinct outcry came to their ears from the rear.

"Reckon we'd better be skinnin' out of this," added Huckleberry, removing the weapons from his fair captive's belt, and making his lariat fast. "Them pizen imps has jest found out we've gin 'em the slip, an' ef they don't do no other hurt, they'll wake up the hull kentry with ther ornamentery noise, an' tell the other critters we're got loose, ef so be they're on the lo-kout for us."

"Think you kin lead the way?" a little doubtfully asked Chincapin Dick.

"Long as we head for that star, we cain't go fur wrong," replied the veteran, nodding toward the north star. "When day comes, then I'll be all right, though I've bin over the ground only once. You keep a eye on the gal, an' see she don't play no tricks on us."

If there was danger in pressing ahead through the night, over an almost wholly strange region to them, there was still greater danger in remaining where they were.

It was absolutely certain that the Mexican soldiers would make an attempt to avenge the death of their captain upon the fugitives. Thoroughly acquainted with the surrounding country, and knowing that the adventurers would naturally make all haste to reach friendly ground, they would endeavor to get to the river in advance, and thus cut them off.

Only for this fact our friends would probably have halted and waited for the light of day to guide them, rather than incur the risk of stumbling upon some of Black Panther's men in the dark. But now, since they held Dashing Dolores as a sort of hostage, there was less to be feared from the outlaws than the other enemy.

As agreed upon, Chincapin Dick rode beside Dashing Dolores, while Huckleberry led the way at as rapid a gait as the nature of the ground would permit. This was broken and rough, rendering the progress made far from satisfactory, especially when the sounds from the direction of the Mexican camp grew louder and plainer, instead of less distinct.

Fortunately, the ground soon became more practicable, and as they advanced with greater speed, the fugitive friends grew more at ease, and began to think matters did not look so black after all, particularly as they heard and saw nothing of the outlaws.

Half an hour later, Huckleberry drew rein at the mouth of a double defile, where the trail they had been following forked. Both defiles led almost due north, and each one seemed to promise easy traveling, yet one might lead them to safety, while the other led to ruin.

"Let your horse choose," suggested Little Jack; and Huckleberry did so.

Without any perceptible hesitation, the animal entered the left hand pass, and the others followed. Why not? They could not have made a better choice, apparently.

Upon such trifles do our fates hinge! Had the right-hand pass been chosen, this story would have had a far different ending.

The narrow defile was followed for nearly half a mile, when a sharp voice rang out upon the night-air, from the darkness in front, demanding, "Who comes?"

"Fire!" cried Dashing Dolores, who had managed to slip the bindings from her mouth. "Fire, and charge! It is the three Tejours!"

A blinding flash lit up the gloom, and high above the echoing firearms came the deep, lion-like roar of Black Panther, chief of the Border Vultures!

(To be continued.)

"Dashing Dolores" was commenced in No. 622.



"OTTO," SON OF THE NEZ PERCÉS CHIEF JOSEPH.

"OTTO," SON OF THE NEZ PERCES INDIAN CHIEF.

At a recent meeting of the Board of Indian Commissioners at the Palace Hotel, San Francisco, and in the presence of a large company of ladies and gentlemen, Colonel C. E. S. MacDonald, the well-known Indian military instructor, introduced Otto, son of Chief Joseph of the Nez Percés tribe. The young Indian was attired in grand costume, and when stripped for action, was conceded to be by the whole assemblage the finest specimen of Indian beauty that they had ever seen, although representatives from every part of the country had been before them. The boy is built like a gladiator, and although but twelve years of age, seemed a man in proportion.

In going through his military exercises, the physical endurance displayed was marvelous. The applause was constant, and the party seemed deeply

moved. This episode was followed by a reiteration of Colonel MacDonald's project for the employment of the Indians which he has been urging upon the Government for many years. It may be remembered that some time ago an official circular was sent to several of the most experienced army officers acquainted with Indian life asking their opinion on the possibility of organizing and drilling the Indians up to the standard of the regular army. The replies indicated that the project was not feasible. Bearing of this decision, Colonel MacDonald determined to try the experiment at his own expense. He proceeded immediately to collect a body of Indians, representing the principal tribes both of British and American Indians, and began drilling them, to prove, as he said, that when properly organized and trained, the Indians would prove better material for warlike purposes for the United States than the Algerians did for France or the Sepoys for England. The first public performance of this singular regiment confirmed his impressions. The Indians moved with almost lightning rapidity, their natural indolence was overcome, and had they been otherwise attired they would have been considered representatives of some first-class National Guard organization. Colonel MacDonald in his instructions, followed in the main the course he laid out when preparing the San Francisco Cadets for their wonderfully successful tour of the United States, and soon had the Indians under such discipline that they would execute the most intricate evolutions either when blindfolded or in utter darkness. The press liberally applauded his efforts; but the authorities, many of whom privately acknowledged the worth and practicability of his scheme, took no official action. The detachment of his first regiment that the colonel took to Europe absolutely astonished the military critics of the leading cities for their proficiency, correctness and discipline.

Colonel MacDonald has recently published an open letter to General Sherman, asking him in the name of justice and humanity that an opportunity may be afforded for solving the perplexing Indian problem, by a plan under which there will be no occasion for extermination or the continual violation of treaties that should be held sacred. Instead of employing our troops to guard and fight the Indians, he would have the Indians trained into regular army life. Their nomadic habits would be checked, they would become more independent, there would be no occasion for frontier wars, and the vast machinery of the Indian bureau would soon become useless.



SEAWAIF.—"BEFORE THE LATTER COULD RETREAT, THE ROAR RUSHED AT HIM. FORTUNATELY, SEAWAIF HAD DRAWN HIS KNIFE TO RIP THE DEAD FISH OPEN, SO THE ATTACK DID NOT FIND HIM ALTOGETHER UNPREPARED."

Distinguished Scholars of Our Schools.

HERMANN MEYER,

PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 37, SOUTH FOURTH STREET, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

HERMANN MEYER is a fine scholar of Grammar School No. 37, South Fourth Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. He is a good-hearted, truthful and persevering boy, who has won the respect of his teachers to an unusual degree. He was born in New York, October 17th, 1864, and is therefore in his fifteenth year. He is the son of Charles and Margaret Meyer. At the age of six years he began going to a private school, and he continued in schools of this kind for some two years. Later he attended different public schools, going through both the primary and grammar studies. When he entered his present school he passed an examination for the second grammar class. At the time of our recent visit to the school we found him busy with the highest studies of the school in the first class, and his name was also on the merit-roll. He studies with intelligence, and he is likewise a close observer. When you talk with him you find him clear in his understanding of both his studies and of events that are passing. He is manly and self-possessed. His head is round, with regular and expressive features. In the class he is always one of the most prompt in answering difficult questions, and at other times his intelligence and judgment are always to be observed.



HERMANN MEYER, PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 37 SOUTH FOURTH STREET, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

MINNIE HARDY,

PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 7, CENTRAL AVENUE, JERSEY CITY, N. J.

MINNIE HARDY is an amiable and studious girl, who is a pupil of Grammar School No. 7, Central Avenue, Jersey City, N. J. "I can warmly praise her," said the principal, "as a most reliable scholar and a modest, dutiful girl." She was born in the city of St. John, New Brunswick, August 18th, 1864, and is therefore fourteen years of age. She is the daughter of James and Anna Hardy. When seven or eight years old she entered her present school in the Primary Department. She studied intelligently even in the lower studies, and was finally promoted with an excellent record. Her continued daily diligence brought forth its results in promotion from class to class with the same high standing. When we saw her recently she was in the second division of the first grade studies, making one hundred per cent. Any one seeing her quiet and absorbed manner in the class must be convinced that her whole mind is given to her studies. Her deportment is so respectful to her teachers, and so becoming with her classmates and others, that her example is of the greatest value in the class. Her head is well shaped, with regular features. She talks pleasantly, and is cheerful and kind-hearted. At the present time her school and its associations are her chief pleasure, for she is well aware that she is making the foundation on which is to rest all that she shall build hereafter.



MINNIE HARDY. PUPIL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL NO. 7, CENTRAL AVENUE, JERSEY CITY, N. J.

SEAWAIF;

Or, THE WHITE KING OF NIMIGI.

The Marvelous Adventures of a Boy, a Monkey and an Elephant in the Wilds of Africa.

By JACK MANLEY,

AUTHOR OF "THREE LIVES," "SUPE THE SHADOW," "GHOSTS OF THE BUCCANEERS," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GOLDEN ANTS OF MOUNT BEGINZE.

A MONTH passed over the kingdom of Dick Batters in a most humdrum and peaceable fashion.

Occasional hunting expeditions alone varied the monotony of life about Sakenje, if we except the frequent rows between Provost-marshal Mako and the pygmies.

These latter, quarrelsome as little people usually are, were now reduced to the most admirable subjection.

They trembled before Mako and the terrible skull standard even as the timid hare shivers at the baying of the hound.

As for Si Gibbs, he was nearly dead.

He had attempted twice to revolt, and on both occasions been overcome by Mako and scourged with nettles.

Finally, Seawaif took pity on him, and when he was so miserably used up that he could scarcely crawl, Mako had been compelled by his master to relax his severity, and Si was permitted to wander about freely, closely watched, however, lest he should undertake to escape.

At the end of the month, King Dick announced that the great visit to the golden mountain was at hand, and invited his friend to accompany the expedition as an honored guest.

The pygmies who were in the secret, and who were to share in the expedition, spent the night preceding their departure in wild incantations of their grotesque deities.

The two white men simply occupied themselves in preparing their arms.

The first streak of dawn found them just finishing.

"Now, then, put these on!" said Dick.

And he tossed his companion a pair of leggins and moccasins, all in one piece, made of deerskin, and thickly besmeared with an unpleasant composition of petroleum, salt, sulphur and wax.

Gloves with long sleeves, made of the same material, and prepared in the same way, were provided for the protection of their hands and arms.

Several large, flat-bottomed canoes, adapted to the navigation of the shallow river, were moored off the village beach.

In these were a number of rude syringes, made by Dick and our hero out of long, hollow bamboo rods.

Several jars filled with a mixture of honey and cane-juice, and a great number containing petroleum, which had been filtered down from the thick, tarry form in which it was originally gathered from the surface of the salt pools, completed the equipment.

Half a dozen smaller canoes had been provided for the members of the expedition, and embarking in these, the larger ones were taken in tow and the party set out.

The voyage was made in silence, all hands evidently realizing the perils they incurred.

All but Seawaif, at least, and even he felt his ardor dampened by the weight of the apprehension which oppressed his companions.

Twelve miles lay between them and Sakenje before the steady movement of the paddles ceased.

"Now recollect, Seawaif," said King Dick, earnestly, "whatever you do, do it quick. Do you understand?"

"I'm lightning," was the reply.

"You'll need to be, mind that."

In the meantime the canoes had been moored to some of the poles which had been used for propelling them, and which were now planted in the water so far from the shore, that it was breast-deep.

The bank at this spot was almost level with the water, and fringed with a narrow but dense thicket.

A broad path, created by the action of fire, traversed this thicket.

Beyond the brush extended a long but narrow expanse of white pebbles and sand, smooth as a dancing-floor, absolutely destitute of vegetation, and gleaming like snow under the sun.

The further boundary of this line of desert was a steep bluff, at least two hundred feet high, and about as great a distance from the water.

The face of this bluff was as smooth as if it had been sliced down with a knife, and beautifully banded by the broad strata of green sand, blue clay, rock, red clay and the like, which composed it in successive layers.

The summit was a barren table-land, sloping gently upward to the base of a towering, treeless peak, which rose grandly toward the sky.

His first glance at this peak drew from Seawaif an exclamation of admiring wonder.

Commencing at the very summit and descending in graceful undulations, a broad band of pure gold glittered in the sun between the bare rock which formed the mountain.

Looking at this view of precious ore, one at once compared it to a large auriferous serpent, wriggling its way toward the clouds.

Seawaif rose in the canoe, and would have leaped ashore if Dick Batters had not gripped him by the arm.

"For God's sake, stop!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "Man alive, to approach that mountain as you are is as much as your life's worth!"

"What nonsense!" cried our hero, impatiently. "Give me half an hour and I'll engage to be at the top."

"No human being ever has been, or ever will be, at the top of Mount Beginze," retorted Dick, earnestly.

"You're a poor lot of climbers, then," said Seawaif, sarcastically.

"The best climber in the world would have to be made of cast-iron to do it."

"But what do you mean?"

"Wait a bit. Look closely at the face of that bluff."

"Well?"

"What do you see?"

"Nothing. That is, except that its bored full of holes, such as the swallows make for their nests."

"There are a good many of them?"

"Millions. The whole mountain seems to be honeycombed."

"Now cast your eye along the foot of the bluff."

Seawaif did so, and uttered a cry of delight.

"Gold!" he screamed.

And gold it indeed was.

In one vast heap along the entire foot of the cliff extended a high bank of those great bright grains of pure gold that our hero had noticed carpeting the floor of the banqueting hall at Sakenje.

There was so little sand among it that it gleamed in the sunlight with dazzling brightness.

"Do you understand yet?" asked Dick, at last.

"I'll swear I don't!" gasped Seawaif, his heart thumping with excitement. "How does it get there?"

"It is brought there by the white ants."

"The white ants?"

"Yes. They have established themselves in countless millions in the heart of the mountain, and in boring out their nests, they have mined that immense vein of gold, whose outcrop you see on the peak there. Their numbers increase each year, and as they penetrate constantly deeper, the supply of gold is continually renewed. What you took for swallow-holes are the entrances to their burrows."

"So that the mountain is in fact simply a vast ant hill?"

"Just so."

At this juncture one of the pygmies announced that all was ready and that King Dick's order alone was wanting for the raid on the treasure heap to commence.

That order was promptly given.

In obedience to it a dozen young dwarfs snatched up the great jars of honey, and, dropping into the water, waded ashore.

They moved with the utmost celerity, bounding up the bank and dashing across the plain toward the foot of the bluff.

Their companions, including Dick, Seawaif and Mako, who, of course, formed one of the party, followed them at once.

They carried with them the bamboo syringes and the jars of petroleum.

Hurriedly commanding Seawaif to imitate his example, King Dick and his subjects plunged the syringes into the vessels of oil, and sucked up their greasy contents.

Then, advancing rapidly, they squirted the oil on either side of them in a broad belt from the river's bank to the foot of the cliff.

Thus they mapped out a wide path up to the base of the glittering mound, bounded on each side by a broad band of oil.

As they advanced, they saw the young men who had landed with the honey-jars running breathlessly toward them.

As they ran, they allowed the sweet contents of their jars to pour out in continuous streams.

By this time the white ants were swarming out of their burrows in the cliff in dense swarms, advancing with surprising rapidity on the intruders.

They were most formidable creatures, far larger than those which had devoured the sorcerer, and so fierce that they often fell upon and devoured one another as they ran.

When they reached the streams of honey they stopped and commenced to feed on it, which gave the gold-hunters time to complete their oily boundary lines, and saturate the base of the cliff with petroleum.

Then Dick Batters struck a light and touched it to the protecting lines, just as the first of the ants, having finished off the honey, advanced to the invaders and strove to cross the petroleum barrier and reach them.

The flame spread in a flash, inclosing the gold-seekers between two mounting walls of fire.

The ants recoiled from this palisade of flames, which several of the natives kept constantly feeding with fresh oil.

Seawalf and the rest, meanwhile, made a dash for the mound of gold, filling jars and everything else that was handy, and bearing them swiftly to the canoes, into whose bottoms they emptied their precious contents.

It was hot work, and lasted for an hour.

Then, to the joy of the exhausted treasure-seekers, Dick announced that the canoes could hold no more.

In effect they were loaded to the water's edge with gold, and the adventurers saw that they would be compelled to swim along beside them.

Nothing daunted by this prospect, they plunged into the water.

Not a moment too soon.

The fiery limit lines of the road by which they had robbed the white ants of their wealth had begun to diminish in breadth, until they faded to a thin thread.

This, in a moment more, puffed suddenly up and went out.

Then, as the gold-hunters drifted away, they saw the space over which they had so lately operated in safety covered with a squirming, struggling carpet of white ants, who, for lack of some better revenge, began to fight one another.

The adventure of the golden mountain was not yet over, however.

The canoes had traversed about half the distance between the ant mine and the village when one of the pygmies uttered a cry of alarm.

"What's up now?" demanded Dick, who, with his friend, was walking down the river-bank, while his subjects trotted along ahead, towing the canoes after them. "What is the matter?"

"The Nimigis!" responded the man, who had uttered the cry.

And he pointed to the west.

The land through which the river made its way was now a vast plain, covered with shallow pools of salt water, all crusted with the naphtha tar.

To the westward the plain was bounded by a range of towering mountains, which Seawalf had learned formed the boundary of the kingdom of Nimigi.

Approaching from that direction was a strong party of armed men.

They were attired in a semi-Arabian costume, and were mounted on small but fleet horses.

On they came, plashing through the petroleum pools and brandishing their weapons, while they uttered shrill war-cries.

None of the pygmies were armed, the only weapons in the party being the guns and knives of our hero, Dick and Mako, and a couple of revolvers which the two first carried.

At a sharp word of command, the dwarfs plunged into the water and towed the canoes across to the other bank.

The approaching Nimigians greeted this movement with a furious shout.

It was clear that they lay in wait for the return of the annual treasure party from Mount Beginne, and exact a tribute of a canoe full of gold from the little savages.

"But they don't get it this year," muttered Dick, between his teeth. "Steady, now, old boy. Don't waste a shot."

"I won't, never fear," responded Seawalf, calmly. "I'll take that tall man on the gray horse for a starter."

"And I'll pick off the one next to him. Ready?"

"Ready."

"Then fire!"

Three shots rang out, the reports blending into one.

Three shrieks escaped the ranks of the Nimigians, three figures tumbled from their saddles, and three riderless horses, carried away by excitement, dashed toward the firing party.

To seize their bridles and mount was with our friends the work of an instant.

They had been standing at the water's edge when they fired, and now they dashed fearlessly at the enemy.

Astounded by this daring movement, the Nimigians faltered.

Encouraged by their leaders, however, they rallied almost instantly, and the combatants closed.

A dense mass of struggling men and horses was, for a time, all that was visible.

Then the Nimigians began to break ranks, and our hero and Dick rode to and fro among them, dealing death on all hands with their revolvers and knives.

Mako, standing erect in his saddle, with the bridle between his teeth, had clubbed his gun and laid about him, braining an enemy at every blow.

All three were wounded, but not seriously enough to disable them.

Their opponents, however, were totally demoralized.

After a last attempt to resist, they abandoned all opposition and fled in confusion, followed by a shout of triumph from the victors.

"The job's not done yet, though," observed Dick, who was tying a handkerchief about a cut in his head to prevent the blood from streaming into his eyes and blinding him. "Look there! They have sent out the reserves."

And he pointed to a second party which was just joining the routed one.

The two remained for some minutes stationary, occasionally gesticulating toward the river in a way that showed they were discussing what to do further.

Then they divided into two parties.

One of these rode rapidly toward the river at a point below the defenders of the treasure, and from which they would be able to intercept the canoes which, during the fight, the pygmies had been towing away as fast as they could.

The other advanced on the three authors of their previous defeat.

Dick examined his gun, and cast an anxious glance toward the canoes.

"I'm afraid they have got it, after all," he said. "I swore last year that I wouldn't pay any more tribute, but it looks as if they would take it for themselves."

"Not if I know it," observed Seawalf, who had been riding along the brink of one of the oil pools, examining it. "Wait a minute."

And tearing a strip from his shirt for tinder, he ignited it by the flint and steel he always carried.

A single breath sufficed to blow it into a glow, when he tossed it upon the surface of the oil pool.

The naphtha ignited in the fraction of a second, and a great pillar of fire shot high up in the air.

The flames spread with incalculable rapidity.

They extended from pool to pool by the little channels that connected them, and in a few minutes the whole plain was in flames.

Even the earth, saturated with oil from the overflowing of the ponds, caught fire, and one vast sheet of flame rolled in incandescent billows over the level expanse even to the foot of the distant mountains.

Seawalf and his companions had scarcely time to reach the river, even then suffering a scorching that rendered Mako almost hairless.

As for the Nimigians there was no escape for them from this fiery furnace.

The nearest of them were at least a quarter of a mile from the river when the fire surrounded them, and they perished, horse and man.

Two hours later the treasure arrived safely at Sakenje.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH SI GIBBS DESERTS TO THE ENEMY.

SEVERAL days were busily passed in Sakenje washing out the gold and running it into bars.

Then King Dick announced to the pygmies his intention of quitting them and returning to his own country.

The despair of the little people was boundless.

They thought their good fortune was deserting them, and nothing could console them.

Dick was resolute though.

His share of the proceeds of the annual treasure hunts now amounted to a fine fortune, and he wanted to go somewhere to enjoy it.

Finding that he could not be moved from his purpose, his disconsolate subjects begged him to appoint a successor.

He did so, and the morning after the new king was crowned, the abdicated monarch departed from the Akka country.

He was accompanied by an escort of two hundred picked warriors, for the way to the river down which they had to travel to reach the coast lay through the very heart of the hostile land of Nimigi.

The treasure, which consisted of nearly a thousand pounds of bar gold, was loaded on the three horses captured in the late fight.

Dick and Seawalf marched at the side of the laden steeds.

Ahead of them tramped Mako with a wary eye on Si Gibbs, who had quite recovered, and whom our hero would not permit the monkey to bullyrag now without cause.

If Si had been a grateful being he would have appreciated this kindness.

But he was not.

Deep in his black heart he nourished a grim purpose, and every step forward that the cavalcade made was a move toward its realization.

The first night's camp was made at the foot of the mountains which formed a natural boundary betweeen Nimigi and the Akka country.

The second day's journey carried them over the mountains.

The country now presented the aspect of a series of vast natural terraces, covered with thick, short grass, and abounding in small game.

They advanced with great caution for forty-eight hours more, meeting no human being whatever, though once they saw at a great distance a body of armed men traveling in the same direction as themselves, but at so much greater speed that they were soon out of sight.

The encampment of the fourth day was made on the banks of a small stream, far down which the travelers could see a high hill with precipitous sides, which rose prominently above the level country around.

This hill, the pygmies explained, was the stronghold of the rulers of Nimigi.

On its summit was built their chief city, while a few scattered villages on the plains around provided the inhabitants with such little food as the rich spoils of the chase left them in want of.

The Nimigians, our hero learned, were a most singular people.

They were an offshoot of one of the Arabian races which people the north of Africa, and had originally emigrated across the great Sahara to escape the persecution of some powerful neighbors, and settled in their present domain.

They were partially civilized, lived in substantial houses of wood and stone, and possessed great wealth.

After pitching camp, Seawalf strolled off to get a shot at some game, as the larder was in a most consumptive condition.

He took Si Gibbs along to help carry the result of the hunt, while Mako skipped nimbly ahead with his gun on his shoulder.

Before they had gone far they discovered a herd of twenty wild hogs browsing around the borders of a little pond.

Both Mako and his master fired at them, and two fell.

The others scattered, and our hero, mistaking their confusion for a rout, incautiously advanced close to the victim of his shot.

A mistake he had cause to regret his rashness.

The hogs, instead of retreating further, gathered closely together, while one of them, a grizzly old boar, with tusks half a foot long, faced suddenly about and confronted the young hunter.

Before the latter could retreat, the boar rushed at him.

Fortunately, Seawalf had drawn his knife to rip the dead pigs open, so the attack did not find him altogether unprepared.

He received a severe gash in the leg from the formidable tusks, but a well directed slash severed the boar's windpipe, and he dropped.

Then our hero jumped back, and, catching the hand which Mako extended to him, hauled himself up into a tree in which the ape had already taken refuge, just in time to escape the other hogs, which made a savage run at him.

He had scarcely settled himself on one of the lower branches, when a yell of terror attracted his attention.

The author of it was Si Gibbs.

That worthy had sought refuge in a branching mimosa, into whose limbs he had climbed, in spite of the ugly thorns with which the trunk bristled.

There, disappointed at their prey in the case of Seawalf, turned their attention to the tree in which the terrified Si was.

They gathered around it, fiercely grinding their tusks, and looking up at him with red, fiery eyes.

Alarmed at their ferocious appearance, Si—though he was quite safe where he was—determined to climb higher.

At the first glance he cast upward, he uttered that cry of alarm which had startled Seawalf.

Marvel not, reader.

Coiled in a fork of the tree above his head was a huge wild-cat.

The brute must have been gorged with food, for it simply sat looking down at him without attempting an attack.

The mere sight of it was enough for Si, though.

With another agonized screech he tumbled backward and fell from the branch.

The seat of his pants, luckily for him, caught in a bunch of the strong thorns which projected everywhere, and he hung suspended over the heads of the boars, and just out of their reach.

His last scream had aroused the wild-cat from its inactivity.

With a loud snarl it jumped up and poised itself for a leap. Then it launched out.

It missed its intended victim and tumbled among the boars.

In a minute they had scattered, leaving the field to a brute which they knew to be more ferocious and formidable than themselves.

The cat squatted on its haunches and looked up at Si.

Then it made a dab at him with one of its paws.

He dodged to avoid the blow, and the movement evidently pleased the wild-cat, for it commenced to play with him as one of its tame sisters would play with a mouse.

It jumped up at him, made little dabs at him with its velvety paws, and switched his face with its tail, while the perspiration of terror streamed from the victim's face and pattered on the grass.

The fun did not last long, for the cat began to get tired of it and grew ferocious.

At this juncture our hero judged it appropriate to take a hand in the game himself.

He had descended and recovered his gun, so now he took deliberate aim and fired.

The cat happened to make a quick movement at time, and the ball missed its mark.

Startled by the report, the brute abandoned its sport and looked around, snarling.

Seawalf had jumped behind a tree and was reloading his gun, when Mako, who still sat on the branches, fired.

The sharp, screaming snarl the cat uttered showed that it was hit.

A second shot from our hero provoked a repetition of the sound.

Neither missile, however, had reached a vital part, and now the brute turned, and with a howl, leaped at the tree.

Evasion was impossible, and, with his back against a tree, Seawalf awaited the attack, knife in hand.

The enraged animal landed on his chest and fastened its long curved claws in his shoulder.

How it did so, our hero drove his knife to the hilt in its breast.

Both came to the ground together; but the struggle did not last long.

Again and again the deadly blade entered the furious beast's body, till at last, weakened by loss of blood, it relaxed its hold and rolled off, dead.

With the exception of some deep scratches in his shoulder, Seawalf was unhurt.

"I guess I've had enough hunting for to-day, though," he said, laughing. "We'll load our friend there, Mako, and get back to camp."

Accordingly, he relieved Si from his condition of suspense, and after disemboweling the two hogs, he piled the carcasses on his back.

How he did so, our hero drove his knife to the hilt in its breast.

Both came to the ground together; but the struggle did not last long.

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The chief task now be devided, he taking one-half and Mako the other.

As their hunting had led them from the camp in a roundabout way, our hero determined to regain it by a more direct course.

He therefore struck off boldly ahead, meeting with no impediment until his course was arrested by a little stream purling softly along over a bed of fine yellow sand.

The water was scarcely six inches deep, and Seawalf ordered it without hesitation.

He sank immediately to his hips.

The apparently firm bed over which the clear water glided was in fact a mere snare, a quicksand of the worst character.

The first instinctive movement he made to release himself sent Seawalf in up to his chest.

He had dropped the load of meat he was carrying, and it had disappeared almost at once.

Now he called to Si Gibbs to assist him.

The only answer was a fiendish, mocking laugh.

"You villain!" he cried. "Are you a man or a devil?"

"A man," sneered Si, glaring down at him from the bank with features distorted by a diabolical delight, "and your enemy."

"Yet I have saved your life more than once."

"The more fool you."

"You mean to desert me here, then?" exclaimed our hero.

"I do. Sink, smother—die, curse you! life the dog that you are!"

And as Mako, who was beginning to appreciate the condition of affairs, made a menacing movement, the speaker darted off.

It was fortunate for him that the faithful ape would not desert his master.

As it was, he ran away in the direction of Nimigi unmolested, while poor Mako skipped around the bank, mumbling and chattering in great distress.

Seawalf had now been sucked down by the quicksand till the water reached his armpits.

By a few signs he contrived to make Mako understand him, and the latter set to work to skin the boars which Si had dropped.

He performed his task so expeditiously that in a very few minutes their hides were free.

Then he cut them into broad strips, which he knotted together till they formed a strong rope.

This rope he threw to his master, and the latter caught it just as the water covered his chin.

Mako was naturally more powerful than most men, and the perilous position of his beloved master lent him additional power.

Still he had to strain till his strong joints cracked before the voracious clutch of the quicksand began to loosen.

When it did begin it came all of a sudden, and Seawalf came flying upon the bank, while the ape tumbled back, turning a somersault and falling on his face.

After having sufficiently recovered themselves they crossed the dangerous creek at a point where it was narrow enough for them to leap it, and hurried to the camp.

Of course there was no sign of Si Gibbs there.

Although not at all probable that he had ventured back into the hands of the Nimigians, still Seawalf feared his malignity enough to make him cautious.

"He will do all he can to injure us, and if he can purchase his freedom and immunity from punishment for his escape by bringing the Nimigians down on us, he will do so, I am sure. So we had better be on our guard."

Accordingly, when the camp retired to rest, all hands slept on their arms, and a strong picket kept up a constant watch.

It was close upon midnight before anything occurred to warrant this caution.

Then one of the vedettes uttered a war-cry.

Its echo was still in the air when a herd of dark figures burst upon the sleeping camp.

A terrific struggle followed, for the pygmies were perfect devils in a fight.

It ended by the assailants being beaten off.

They retired in tolerably good order, however, and it was some time before Dick Batters could assemble what was left of his party.

Seawalf and Mako were not among them.

Thinking that they had perhaps pressed on after the retreating party, carried away by the ardor of pursuit, he waited until morning.

But dawn brought no sign of them, and he bit his lips and murmured:

"They have been captured, sure."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH THUNDERBOLT TURNS UP IN THE VERY NICK OF TIME.

SEAWALF and Mako had indeed been captured.

Or rather the first had, while the affectionate ape had allowed himself to be seized rather than part from his master.

Stunned by a blow from a club, Seawalf only recovered consciousness to find himself, bound hand and foot, being carried along on the shoulders of four sturdy savages.

Mako trotted alongside of him, and on the other Si Gibbs strode beside a tall, handsome, copper-colored man, who, from the profusion of ornaments he wore, seemed to be the chief of the party.

Our hero now saw that his suspicions had been well founded.

Si had indeed fled to the Nimigians, and led them down on the camp, hoping by putting the rich booty in their hands to secure good treatment for himself, and at the same time gratify his spite against those he hated.

The result had not equaled his expectations, and the savages, foiled in their purposes against Dick Batters's bars of gold, were furiously ill-tempered.

Consequently, Mr. Gibbs came in for more kicks than ha'pence, and was finally glad to lose himself in the crowd, out of reach of the tall old chief's eye.

After marching for about an hour, Seawalf was released from his bonds and made to walk between a strong guard of his captors.

The reason of this move was soon explained.

The road began to ascend steeply, till it seemed to be a mere flight of steps cut in the rock.

Our hero comprehended that he was climbing the hill on which the capital of Nimigi was perched.

The night was pitch dark, and he could scarcely distinguish even the shadowy figures of his guards till the top of the ascent was reached.

Then the glare of a hundred torches in the hands of as many armed men revealed his surroundings.

He was in a sort of plaza, in front of a very extensive building with a huge courtyard in front of it, walled with stone, and entered by a gateway closed with a heavy wooden gate.

Through this gate which was opened before him he was conducted into a vast inclosed space, and across it to the front of the building itself.

The door of this structure was lofty and wide, and the lintel and doorposts were ornamented with grotesque figures formed from human skulls and bones.

A couple of men who were evidently slaves, unbarred the portal, and the party entered a great hall whose walls were lined with the figures of uncouth deities in wood and stone.

The jeweled eyes and the valuable gold ornaments of these idols reflected the torchlight in a thousand varied rays.

At the head of the hall a queer-looking old savage in a red robe and a turban squatted on a sort of platform carpeted with cloth of gold.

The warriors, as they entered, made profound obeisance, which he acknowledged with a curt wave of the hand.

"My brothers and my children have returned," he said, in a harsh voice. "But where is the treasure with which they were to ornament the great Hall of Judgment of Nimigi?"

The warriors hung their heads, while the tall chief, in a submissive voice, said:

"There is none!"

"There is none!" repeated the old man, angrily. "Did the white slave then lie?"

"He spoke truth. But the war-gods are displeased with us. We were defeated."

"Defeated!" screamed the chief Fetich man, for such was the hoary barbarian's position. "Defeated, and you live to tell it and to come back empty-handed!"

"Not quite empty-handed," was the reply, "for we have a white face sacrifice to the great Fetich."

"A white face," repeated the Fetich priest, contemptuously. "What is a white face compared to gold? Where is he?"

The chief shoved our hero rudely forward.

"Here," he said.

In spite of his peril and of the fierce resentment the abominable treachery of Si Gibbs caused him, Seawalf remained coolly self-possessed, whistling a sailor's song as he faced his captors.

Not so Mako.

Grinding his strong teeth with rage, the monkey bounded at the nearest of his enemies and seized him by the throat.

A cry of alarm burst from the bystanders as, with a single movement of his powerful arm, the monkey raised the man above his head and dashed him from him.

The victim struck the wall of the hall with a frightful crash, and fell senseless with half his ribs stoved in.

A roar of execration hailed this act, and the surrounding soldiers made a movement toward the monkey.

The latter bounded to his master's side, and the voice of the chief of the Nimigians sounded sternly over the murmurs of his followers:

"Do not harm them," he said. "A life more or less does not matter."

"Not such lives as yours, at least," thought our hero.

"If you take my advice," remarked Si, to the chief, "you'll kill the pair of 'em off at once. They're dangerous, I tell you."

"They will be dangerous for you if they ever get at you!" said Seawalf, fiercely.

"Oh, but they never will," responded Si, with a leer of satisfaction.

"That remains to be seen. We're not dead yet."

"But you soon will be."

"Enough of this," said the chief, angrily. "To the prison with them."

The soldiers closed round the two prisoners, and Si Gibbs was rubbing his hands and chuckling triumphantly, when the leader of the Nimigians turned suddenly on him.

"As for this dog of dogs," he said, grimly, "let him be fastinadoed and then chained to the great water-wheel."

And as our hero and Mako were hurried away, they heard the tortured yells of their betrayer filling the air as the bastinado was vigorously applied.

Long before the punishment was completed the prisoners had been conducted out of the outer hall, and thrown into one of the numerous out-buildings whose heavy door was at once closed upon them.

A couple of mats were thrown in after them, and, couched on those, the captives went to sleep.

Three days passed in this prison.

On the morning of the fourth, the inmates of the cell were awakened by a chorus of wild music, and they had just got up when the door of their place of confinement was opened, and a number of warriors appeared outside.

At their head was a curious figure, that of one of their sorcerers, while behind them our hero could see the court-yard filled with people.

A dozen of the warriors entered, while the sorcerer on the threshold chanted an incantation in a voice like a jackman's bell, the people outside occasionally assisting him with a chorus that sounded like the howling of an army of jackals.

Two of the Nimiguane, one of whom carried a long cord, approached Mako while two others went toward our hero.

At the first movement the men made to bind him, Seawalf, who had made up his mind to give them as much trouble as possible, hauled off and knocked one down.

Quick as lightning Mako imitated his master.

Then the two threw themselves upon the soldiers, and for a couple of minutes nothing could be seen or heard but a confusion of struggling bodies and savage cries.

The affair ended by the warriors retreating so precipitately, that they knocked the sorcerer down in the doorway, and he rolled into the prison.

Mako immediately seated himself on his chest and proceeded to divest him of the tawdry brass and copper ornaments he wore in a great profusion.

An explosion of outcries resounded from the crowd, which was almost immediately silenced by a sharp, imperious voice whose owner our hero could not see.

Neither could he make out the tenor of the speech.

It was a stern order to secure the prisoners at any cost, that was evident, for at least fifty soldiers now advanced on them.

To have resisted this overwhelming force would have been madness, and Seawalf now submitted to be bound in quiet.

Mako, seeing that he offered no objection to the operation, submitted to it on his own part with the same good grace.

Their hands being bound behind their backs, they were forced out of their prison.

The ivory trumpets and the tom-toms, from which the music which had awakened the prisoners had proceeded, recommenced their clamor, and surrounded by a vast and noisy rabble the captives passed through the long courtyard of the great Hall of Judgment.

The city of Nimigi, as has been said, was built on the summit of a high, flat-topped hill, whose precipitous sides rendered the place almost impregnable.

The houses, built in the Arabian fashion, with inclosed courtyards, were interspersed with groves of palm, mimosa and prickly pear, which had been planted and were preserved by irrigation, the water for that purpose being derived from a deep well in the middle of the town.

The water was raised by an immense horizontal wheel, to the shafts of which malefactors were chained, and as our hero passed it he saw Si Gibbs tugging like a mule among the others, moving the heavy wheel round and round in one dreary monotonous circle.

Perilous as his own position was, the sight of Mr. Gibbs and his punishment almost reconciled his victim to it.

So far Mako, he chattered and grinned maliciously at the villain to whom the wise ape knew he and his master owed their present uncomfortable fix.

The crowd applauded loudly.

Furious as they were against the prisoners, they at least respected their courage, while for the miserable ingrate who had betrayed them they could entertain only a feeling of the most profound contempt.

So they commenced pelting Si Gibbs with mud, rotten fruit and stones, until a dead cat hit him on the head and knocked him senseless, after which they resumed their march.

This led them through the town to the side opposite that on which the judgment-hall stood.

On the edge of the cliff stood an imposing building of wood and stone, plastered with white and red clay in eccentric figures that lent it a most picturesque appearance.

A species of balcony was built out of the wall of this structure at the level of the second floor.

This little lodge, constructed of hard, dark woods, with all the curious and eccentric carvings common to Oriental architecture, overlooked a vast inclosure fenced in by high, thick walls of prickly-pear.

The inclosure contained only one thing.

That was a rude altar of rough stone, whose light surface had been stained and blackened by the blood of a thousand sacrifices.

It required no guide-book to inform our hero of the character of the place.

The building was the palace of Queen Namonne.

The inclosure was the great place of sacrifices of which he had more than once heard.

And the little balcony was the private-box from which the savage queen contemplated the sanguinary drama she so rejoiced in at her ease.

On reaching the hedge of prickly-pear the cortège halted, and the old chief signified to Seawalf and his companion to pass through a small gate of stout wooden bars, which offered the only means of ingress to the inclosure.

Our hero obeyed without a word.

He expected to die, and determined to die in a way that he would not be ashamed of.

As they passed into the place of sacrifices, a soldier severed the bonds at their wrists.

To Seawalf's amazement, the gate was then closed and secured at once, leaving them alone in the amphitheatre.

They were not to be sacrificed then! What fate was reserved for them?

As if in reply, a deep, vibrating roar made the air quiver.

It proceeded from an arched opening in the base of the palace wall, which was closed by a barred gate of iron.

Seawalf, stoutly as he had nerved himself to his purpose, shuddered involuntarily.

This roar which made the air shake was the terrible call of that monarch of the deserts and the forests, the great black African lion.

Now he understood his fate.

He was to perish under the assaults of a famished lion!

At the formidable cry from the arched vault, Mako screamed with trepidation.

Then he looked imploringly into his master's face.

Seawalf smiled sadly, shook his head, and folded his arms.

This movement, which said as plainly as words, "It is all up with us," the monkey imitated exactly.

He, too, shook his head, and folding his arms, drew himself straight up beside his master, close to the altar.

The lookers-on, who swarmed in all the trees and on all the house-tops around the amphitheatre, gave vent to a involuntary shout of admiration.

Even from the people at the many little window openings in the palace wall escaped an exclamation, and Seawalf fancied he could see the lattices of the queen's balcony shake, as if she, too, shared in the general homage to his courage.

A second later a sharp voice from the balcony rang out.

As if my magic, the grating of the vaulted opening under the lodge sank into the earth.

Another roar rent the air, and then, with his flanks thin and his eyes blazing with famine, an enormous black lion bounded into the arena.

The brute stopped and looked at his victims.

Then he made a slow circuit of them, Seawalf and Mako always turning so as to face him.

This movement and their composure evidently perplexed him.

He suspected a snare and drew back growling to the hedge, cowed by the firm glance of the young adventurer.

His hunger was too great to be withstood, however, and he finally gathered for a spring.

"Good-by, Seawalf & Co.," thought our hero.

And he closed his eyes just as the lithe bulk of the lion shot up in the air.

Stiff and firm as a young oak, he stood there awaiting his death.

In the space of those few seconds all his life, with every varied adventure from the time when he was picked up from the sea till now, flashed across his mind.

Then a tremendous shout aroused him, and he opened his eyes.

That which they revealed to him drew from him a veritable scream of amazement.

At the moment when the lion rose in the air, an enormous head appeared over the top of the hedge, and a long object which was nothing less than the trunk of an elephant was extended.

It seized the lion by the middle and closed upon his thin flanks with the crushing power of a vise.

The brute's ribs crashed and his skin burst. But shaking him furiously, raining a shower of blood all about, the elephant beat down the hedge, and trotting into the inclosure, laid the dead lion on the altar in front of Seawalf and Mako.

It was this which had evoked from the spectators the mighty shout our hero had heard.

Having deposited his offering on the altar, the elephant, whom the reader has of course recognized, gently raised his master to his back, whither Mako bounded after him.

At this new exhibition, another roar burst from the assembled multitude.

"A miracle! a miracle!" they shouted.

The blinds of the balcony were rattled violently, and a voice, sacred and omnipotent in Nimigi, silenced the tumult.

The stillness of death rested for a minute over the assemblage.

Then the voice said:

"The great spirits have spoken. The stranger with the white face must live."

"Yes, yes, live!" howled the mob.

And the hot air was rent by a great hurrah, that made the very earth tremble, and moved the tree-tops like the breath of a tempest.

[To be continued.]

"Seawalf" was commenced in No. 446.

THE PEDOMOTOR.

THE LATEST INVENTION IN PEDESTRIANISM.

An invention which promises to be of great practical utility is just now attracting attention in Philadelphia, where the inventor, Mr. J. H. Hobbs, a well-known architect, resides. It is known as the pedomotor, and is designed for the use of pedestrians, who can attain by it a speed of ten or twelve miles an hour with entire ease. The pedomotor consists of four tough, light wooden wheels, supplied with an outer rim of tough India-rubber. These wheels are secured to a frame the shape of the foot, which is strapped to the pedal extremities in the usual manner.

Unlike roller-skates, the wheels of these little vehicles are not under, but are placed on each side of the foot, thus giving the wearer a good standing as well as a solid footing. The rear wheels are three inches in diameter, while those in front are but two and a half inches.

This gives the foot a slight incline, and when in motion has much to do in impelling the pedestrian forward. Extending from the toe, with a slight curl toward the ground, is a piece of casting termed the pusher, which is simply used in mounting the elevation or steep incline. From the centre of the heel a small brass wheel extends backward, serving as a guide as well as a brake. The whole scarcely turns the scale at a pound weight. In using them no more effort is required than in ordinary walking. The wearer steps with his regular stride, and is amazed to find himself skimming over the ground so rapidly with so little muscular effort.

In the diagrams four forms are shown in the act of taking a step. In Fig. 1 the action is for a twenty-inch step, or a slow pacing motion. Fig. 2 is a slow, ordinary walk with a stride of twenty-five inches. Fig. 3 is a rapid thirty-inch step. Fig. 4 is a thirty-inch step, taking the heel, which prevents the movement forward upon the wheels and retards the motion to an ordinary walk. It will be readily observed that a figure taking the weight upon the wheels in the position of Fig. 1, the centre of gravity being behind the wheels, the latter will run forward and distribute weight in a forward motion with equal distance to the velocity of the motion minus the friction upon the journals—the kind foot acting as a propeller to keep the body in equal forward motion.

Any push beyond this immediately causes an increased forward movement. In Figs. 2 and 3 the precise principle is carried out with greater and more rapid motion. Fig. 4 represents the figure in checking the rolling motion, which admits of the immediate halt as in walking. By raising upon the front wheels the body can be turned around with the most rapid motion. Any change of direction can be made gracefully and safely. Less side room is required than in ordinary walking; six inches is sufficient width of pave; one can also walk in much straighter lines. The pedomotors can be made use of upon clay roads, grass, brick or stone pavements; they can be used safely going up or down stairs, crossing streets, etc.; taking each flag as a step, the wearer can ascend and descend the curb without checking his motion.

A pedestrian, using the same exertion as a professional walker, would travel over twelve miles an hour. The lightness obtained by the weight being distributed on the forward motion is very sensible to the wearer, when we consider the fact that a man taking a three-feet step, walking four miles an hour, must necessarily travel a fraction less than six feet each second, and, should he double that motion to twelve feet per second, the rapidity of the forward motion would very materially change the downward weight. Experiments in this may be understood by the ricochet stone skipping over the water, or a heavy ball rolled rapidly over the ice, or the same principle may be discovered in the motion of the gyroscope. The motion differs entirely from the skate. It is simply a forward motion; its effect is to relieve the tiresome jar of the foot on the ground, so that the same amount of walking may be done with the pedomotor with a minimum amount of fatigue. The newspaper carrier who serves papers to the attendants in the Permanent Exhibition Building in Philadelphia goes his rounds at the rate of twelve miles an hour by the use of these vehicles.

THREE MERRY BOYS:

Their Adventures at School.

CHAPTER XXIII.

[Continued from page 46.]

TONY did not like it at all, and he made this fact patent by his fearful yells.

Soker, having polished off his victim to his own satisfaction, let him go, and Tony limped mournfully back to the school.

"What on earth is the matter with you?" Walpole demanded. "Where is the grub?"

"I've been half murdered by that beggar, Soker," Tony replied, mournfully. "I bought some beef and rolls, but they are all over the street, and I haven't even brought back the change. Soker shook it out of my hand, and when I got away from him I saw him pick it up."

The boys looked very glum at each other, and reproachfully at Tony.

"I thought something would come of this," Harry Walpole said; "but it is partly our own fault; we ought to have gone out in a body."

"It's a wonder that mine was not brought back on a shutter," Tony Limpback howled. "It's something dreadful what I have to put up with. I suffer like a martyr."

"There goes the bell," said Bertie Baldwin, "and we shall have the pleasure of being whacked as well as going hungry. Such is the life of a schoolboy."

As soon as the boys who had suffered were released from the thraldom of the schoolroom they went to the playground to discuss what could be done in the way of revenge, and Mr. Makemsmart, having some idea that such would be the case, followed stealthily.

There were some trees at one end of the ground set aside for recreation, and the boys, throwing themselves down under them, began to talk.

"Hush!" said Bertie; "if I am not mistaken our beloved master is hanging about. I fancy I saw him skulk behind that birch."

"I wish it would give him a taster of what it gives us sometimes," said Tony. "I have a good mind to go to a magistrate and show him my marks. I'm black and blue all over."

"He is a wretched old beast," Walpole returned. "and a coward into the bargain. Wait till I grow to be a man, and then won't I give him pepper, that's all!"

"If it were not like a sneak to write home," Willie Howard responded, "I would do so, and my dad would punch his fat head, all over his own house."

"Hold your tongue!" Baldwin gasped. "I tell you that he is listening; I can see the ends of his coat-tails fluttering in the wind."

"I don't care," Tony cried. "Why don't he hire a few niggers, who, as everybody knows, rather like whacking. Old Makemsmart would make a good slave-driver."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Makemsmart from behind the tree, as he bit his under lip. "Another black mark against you, Master Limpback. As soon as you are in something like good condition again, I will give you another dose."

"They say he is spoony on Nudgeham," said Harry Walpole; "she's a widow with a little money, and not so bad-looking, after all."

"I believe I saw him wink at her the other day over the dinner-table," Tony replied. "I am not quite sure, but——"

At this point Mr. Makemsmart's rage knew no bounds, and with a roar like a mad bull he dashed into the midst of the boys.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FLOWER SHOW—A REMARKABLE SPECIMEN OF HORTICULTURE—A TALE OF A TUB, AND HOW SOMEBODY TOOK IT VERY MUCH TO HEART.

AT last, however, Mr. Makemsmart's wrath began to appease, and, finding that the boys were becoming a little more orderly, he purchased a quantity of tickets for a flower-show at half price.

"Of course," he said, "it depends entirely on your conduct whether you go or no. There will be a quantity of genteel people at the show, and I would not for the world have anything happen, so that they might go away and talk of you as ill-behaved."

After this short but emphatic speech, a great change came over the boys. They were as good as the very best of Sunday-school children.

Mr. Makemsmart was so delighted that he not only promised them the treat, but hinted at the refreshment table.

It was a beautiful and heart-moving sight to see how neatly those boys dressed themselves on the morning of the show.

Even Tony Limpback managed to appear without a grease-spot on his jacket, and, what was more wonderful still, he found both his gloves and put them on without tearing off a button.

At noon they set out, Mr. Makemsmart and Mr. Writher heading the procession.

The two gentlemen were clad in spotless black, and looked for all the world like a pair of amiable beetles taking a stroll.

At last the *show-yard* was reached, and Mr. Makemsmart soon lost his pupils in the crowd.

He had endeavored to keep them together, but they had dispersed like a flock of refractory sheep, and, fondly trusting that all would be well, he and his usher walked round admiring the many beautiful specimens of horticulture.

"I say," said Tony Limpback, "keep your eye on the gov'ner, and tell me when you see him coming this way."

"What are you up to now?" Harry Walpole demanded. "None of your tricks, or you will get into trouble."

"I'll bet I don't, now then," Tony replied. "I've been hiding round the corner. See those turnips?"

"Yes. What about them?"

"Turn them round."

Walpole did so, and found that a face had been cut on one of them.

"Who did that?" he asked.

"I did," Tony replied, grinning. "You wait a bit and you will see some jolly fun."

As Tony spoke, Mr. Makemsmart was seen emerging from the crowd, and the youth, taking the three turnips, put the one with the face on the top of a barrel, thrust two more into holes at its sides, and then crept under the barrel himself.

Mr. Makemsmart was alone, and he came on raising his glasses to his eyes and smiling at everything he thought good and shaking his head at everything he did not think worthy of notice.

At last he stopped before the barrel and gazed at its appendages with an expression so full of doubt and perplexity that Harry and Bertie, who were watching, could scarcely keep from laughing outright.

"Most remarkable," said the old gentleman. "What can it be?"

He raised his eye-glasses, and then with a sudden movement he gave the inoffensive turnip a slap which made it roll on to his pet corn.

"Confound it!" Mr. Makemsmart howled, "what stupid trick is this? The secretary ought to know better than to play the fool. I'll report him to the committee."

Tony Limpback could contain himself no longer, and he chuckled audibly.

Mr. Makemsmart's hair rose almost on end as he heard the sound, and the next instant his hands were on the barrel, and his voice was lifted up, shouting to the attendants.

"There'll be a jolly row now, and no mistake," Harry Walpole said to Bertie Baldwin. "I wouldn't be in Tony's place for a trifle."

"It makes me feel cold all down my back to think of his fate," Baldwin replied. "Makemsmart does not dream that one of his own boys is under the tub, or he would not make that row."

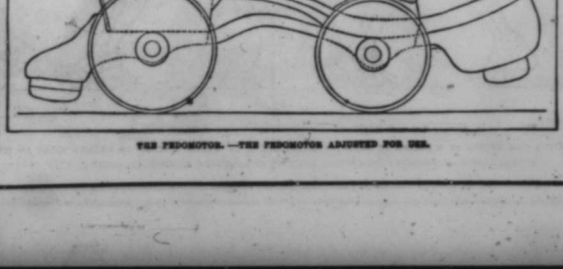
An attendant was soon upon the spot, but when he saw Mr. Makemsmart grasping the barrel, he stopped and asked what was the matter.

In point of fact, he thought that the schoolmaster had taken leave of his senses, and looked round for assistance.

"Come here, quick, man," Mr. Makemsmart said; "I have caught some fellow who has secreted himself here to steal the fruit."

"Oh, lor'!" Tony groaned, "here's a go; don't I wish I could get out!"

The attendant approached, kicked the barrel over, and Tony, falling flat on his back, shot up his feet with such unexpected suddenness that Mr. Makemsmart received both of them with consider-



THE PEDOMOTOR.—THE PEDOMOTOR ADJUSTED FOR USE.

able force on his waistcoat.

"What!" the schoolmaster almost yelled; "what, in the name of a that is just and reasonable, made you get into that tub?"

"Nothing made me," Tony replied, with refreshing candor; "I got in myself."

"Oh! you got in yourself, did you?" Mr. Makemsmart said. "And pray, what did you get into it at all for?"

Tony, of course, had no satisfactory explanation to give, and Mr. Makemsmart, putting a dollar into the attendant's hand, said:

"Will you kindly hold this naughty boy while I administer to him a sound whipping?"

"There'll be a crowd round if he squeals much," the man said; "bring him round to the lodge, outside, and you'll be able to do it there without being interfered with."

"I'm very sorry," Tony began, when Mr. Makemsmart shook the rest of the sentence out of him.

"You will be still more sorry before I have done with you," the schoolmaster said. "Come along, my fine young fellow, and I will provide an antidote against your ever appearing as a natural curiosity again."



THREE MERRY BOYS.—"'MOST REMARKABLE,' SAID THE OLD GENTLEMAN. 'WHAT CAN IT BE?' HE RAISED HIS SPECTACLES, AND WITH A SUDDEN MOVEMENT HE GAVE THE INOFFENSIVE TURNIP A SLAP WHICH MADE IT ROLL ON TO HIS PET CORN."—SEE PAGE 59.

CHAPTER XXV.

TONY LIMPBACK RUNS AWAY AND FALLS INTO BAD HANDS.

TONY hung back and commenced to howl dismally, declaring that he was more like a tattooed Indian than a white boy, but Mr. Makemsmart, assisted by the grinning attendant, landed him within the lodge.

"My boy," said Mr. Makemsmart, "tell me, I beg of you, in what garment did Adam first appear in?"

"He didn't wear clothes at all," Tony replied, sulkily.

"Quite right, Limpback," said Mr. Makemsmart. "Consequently, we will have a specimen of bare skin. Take off your jacket, sir!"

"Oh, no, sir; please, sir!" Tony howled; "it's too awful to think of."

"Shall I help him?" the attendant asked.

"If you please."

Tony was soon ready, and Mr. Makemsmart raised his cane to strike, when a watermelon came through the window and knocked his hat off.

The attendant, who had been grinning at Tony, had now to grin on the other side of his mouth, as he had a piece of glass sticking in the nape of his neck.

Mr. Makemsmart was picking up his hat, when a flower-pot came through the broken window and assisted him into the fireplace.

Leaving Tony to take care of himself, which he did, by bolting, Mr. Makemsmart and the attendant rushed forth in search of the window-breakers, but they were nowhere to be seen.

"It was done by some o' your boys, there ain't the least doubt," the attendant said, "and as I can't be out of pocket, being a married man, with a large family, I shall look to you for payment."

"But," Mr. Makemsmart urged, "you have no proof of what you state. Are there no other boys in the world but those who attend my school?"

"I'm satisfied about one thing," the man replied; "if you were to search the world all over, you couldn't find such an unruly lot o' young warmints."

"I will think about it," Mr. Makemsmart said, "and let you know in the morning."

"The morning won't do for me," the attendant said; "fork over now, or I'll know the reason why. Shell out ten dollars, or in you go into the county court before you can say Jack."

Mr. Makemsmart felt an irresistible temptation to hit the man for his impudence; but he paid the money and went back to the *marquee*. There seeing Mr. Writher, he tapped him on the shoulder and said:

"Get the boys together and set them in order for returning home."

"Has anything happened?" Mr. Writher asked.

"Don't ask me," the schoolmaster replied, knocking his hat over his eyes; "if you particularly wish to know, something has happened, and when I have a quiet interview with that young imp, Limpback, I'll teach him to dance to a new step."

All the boys were hunted up save Tony Limpback, and ranged in a row.

"Where is that boy?" Mr. Makemsmart said. "I will not go back without him; no, not if I stop here all night."

Tony, sick at heart, and sore all over, had run quickly back to the school, where he packed up a few necessary things, and then turned his back on it, as he thought, for ever.

"It makes me feel very much like a coward," he said, "but I can't help that. I wasn't born to be hunted about, and I won't stand it."

He walked a little way up the road, and then, turning, looked back on Wiggleborough.

Where he was going to he had not the slightest notion, or what employment he would seek for a livelihood.

He trudged on until ten miles had been placed between him and the scene of his sufferings, and at last stopped at a roadside inn.

He thought that the landlord looked at him suspiciously, but his fears soon dispersed as nothing was said, save to ask him civilly what he wanted.

Tony had some bread and cheese, and was about to continue his journey, when two showmen, dressed in tawdry finery, came up and sat down on the bench outside.

"I say, Jack Bilbury," said one, "what a jolly life ours is! No rates nor rent to pay, nothing to fear and plenty to eat."

"You are right there, Tom Spinks," Bilbury replied, rubbing his stubbly chin. "Only think of that boy we had making ten pounds a week at Jigger's circus."

Tony Limpback pricked up his ears.

He was tall, slender and lithe, and had often envied a stroller's life, and now here might be a chance open to him which it would be rank folly to throw away.

"Are you in want of a boy?" he asked, timidly.

Jack Bilbury turned round and looked sharply at him.

"We do want a boy, and you look a likely sort," he replied. "What's your name?"

Tony hesitated before replying.

"James Jones," he said, at last.

"Very well, Jemmy Jones, Jack Bilbury said, "me and my mate will take you; that is to say, if you can pay for your grub for a week or two. You will have much to learn, and it isn't reasonable that we can take you for nothing—now, is it?"

Tony Limpback's hopes vanished.

"I am very sorry to say that I have only a few shillings," he said; "but if you will take me, I'll try and make myself useful in many ways."

"It can't be done," Tom Spinks said, shaking his head. "I wish it could, for your sake, my lad; but, hullo, I see you have a gold guard. Is there a watch attached to the end of it?"

"Yes," Tony replied; but I should not like to part with it, as it was given to me by my uncle."

"Well, see here, youngster," Tom Spinks replied, "we don't want to be hard on you; you shall join us, and we will keep your watch till you can pay for it by getting your own living. In a month's time you'll be worth at least two pounds a week, and perhaps more, if you are careful."

Tony Limpback parted with his watch and chain readily.

"Now, let us shake hands all round," said Tom Spinks, "'cause we are now friends and brothers."

Poor innocent Tony was delighted at his good fortune.

"I think we had better be moving," Jack Bilbury said.

"I am of the same opinion, mate," Tom Spinks replied. "Jemmy Jones won't mind lending a hand with the properties, of course?"

"Oh, no," Tony cried, jumping up; "I shall be delighted."

They gave him a heavy bundle to carry, and took very small ones themselves, and half a mile of ground had not been got over before Tony began to perspire profusely.

At last he fairly staggered under his burden, and sat down on a bank.

"It's rather hard work," he said, attempting to smile; "but I shall get used to it in time, I suppose."

"You'd better get used to it as soon as possible," Tom Spinks growled; "the idea of a great long fellow like you giving way under such a trifle."

"If you call this a trifle, I don't," Tony said, savagely; "you are twice as big as I am, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself to let me carry the bundles."

"What's that you say?" Tom Spinks demanded.

"I say that you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Give me my watch and chain and I'll leave you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Spinks laughed.

"Ho, ho, ho!" Jack Bilbury roared, holding his sides, as if to keep them from splitting; "that's not so bad, eh, pardner?"

"Now, look 'ere, youngster, me and my mate knows as well as you what lay you are on. You've runned away from somewheres, and you don't want to go back, but if you give us the slightest trouble we'll hand you over to the first policeman."

This threat had an awful effect on Tony.

His hair almost stood on end, his face went pale as death, and his knees knocked together.

"You are awfully hard on me," he said; "I have done my best, but I can't carry my bundle another hundred yards to save my life."

"Oh! you can't," Spinks growled, unbuckling the strap he wore about his waist; "we'll soon see about that."

"Give it to him hot, Tom," Jack Bilbury said, rubbing his hands with delight. "Two or three doses will bring him round to his senses."

"Oh, lor!" Tony groaned, as he watched the strap as it coiled and writhed in the air like a serpent. "I have fallen into nice hands."

"Now, perhaps you'll pick up that 'ere bundle and foller us," Spinks growled. "We ain't goin' to stand none o' your nonsense, so don't think it. Up you gets, or down comes the strap again."

Poor Tony Limpback, waiting at the bottom of his heart that he had never been born, shouldered the bundle and tottered along.

Trees, houses and sky danced before his eyes, and he fell senseless on the ground.

"We have gone a little too far," Bilbury said.

"What's to be done, Tom?"

"Why, leave him where he is," Tom Spinks replied, with an oath.

"I ain't quite sure that that will be safe," Bilbury said, shaking his head. "We may get into trouble."

"Pooh!" Spinks sneered. "The whelp will be only too glad to find that we are gone. Let us cut across the fields to Belton, and then he is welcome to find us if he can."

Bilbury, who was the most humane of the two ruffians, stooped down and put a few shillings into

"The best thing I ever heard on," Spinks replied, striding toward Tony; "Now, look 'ere, youngster, me and my mate knows as well as you what lay you are on. You've runned away from somewheres, and you don't want to go back, but if you give us the slightest trouble we'll hand you over to the first policeman."

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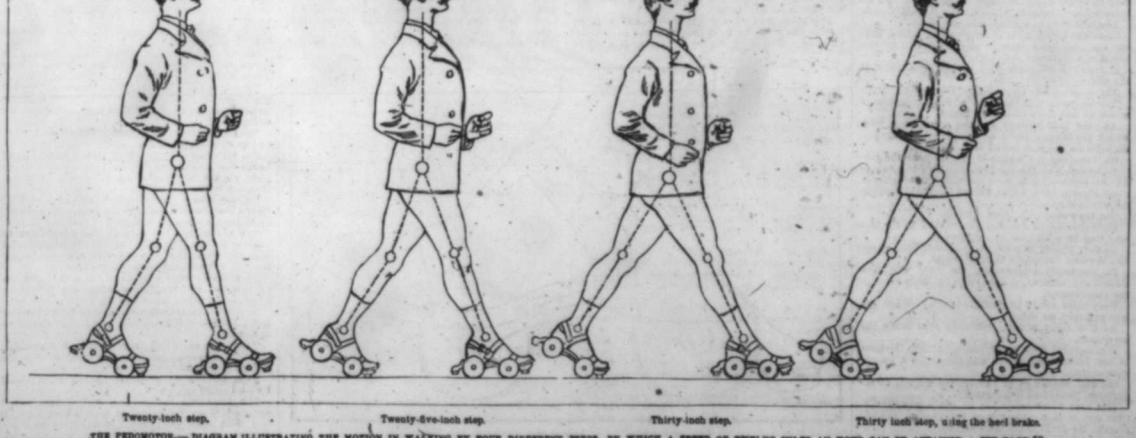
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Twenty-inch step. Twenty-five-inch step. Thirty-inch step. Thirty inch step, using the heel brake.

THE PEDOMOTOR.—DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE MOTION IN WALKING BY FOUR DIFFERENT STEPS, BY WHICH A SPEED OF TWELVE MILES AN HOUR CAN BE ATTAINED.—SEE PAGE 59.

Tony's pocket, and then they left him and continued their journey.

In about half an hour, Tony opened one eye, then the other, and having looked vaguely about him, he scrowed and sat up.

"I wonder where I am?" he said, feebly. "I suppose I got tired and fell down here and went to sleep. Lor! what a funny dream I had! I wonder what's o'clock?"

He felt for his watch, but naturally enough, found it not.

Then the whole truth flashed through his brain, and covering his face with his hands, he moaned out:

"Oh, what brutes, to rob a poor boy like me!"

Vain regrets were useless, so Tony rose and strode sturdily along the road, till night came on.

He could see no signs of a village, and to make matters worse, it began to rain, first slowly, but steadily increasing to a smart shower.

"I don't think that I should have run away at all if I had known that I should have had to put up with this sort of thing," Tony groaned; "but I have made my own bed, and I must be contented with it. Hullo! Hurrah! there is a light at last, and it promises, at least, shelter, a good fire, and something to eat."

The light glimmering through the trees was hidden at times, but Tony held his course, and after a few minutes' walk stood at the door of a dilapidated house.

Tony knocked at the cottage door, but receiving no reply, raised the latch.

Opposite him was the fireplace, in which a fire of wood burnt brightly enough, but there was little or no furniture in the room.

An old man, with hair as white as driven snow, sat cowering in the chimney-corner. His face was buried in his hands, and, as he rocked slowly to and fro, he made a low, moaning sound, which smote Tony's heart.

The boy was about to turn away when the old man looked up.

He rose and staggered to the door with his arms outstretched before him, as it to ward something off.

Tony, frightened at the old man's strange appearance, retreated step by step.

"Have no fear of me," the old man said. "I would not harm a hair of your head to save my life. I thought she called me, but she is dead, and, although I have no fear of her, I dread to see her spirit. She often asks my forgiveness. Heaven knows that I forgive her freely, but her voice drives me mad."

A cold tremor ran down Tony's back as he listened, and, much as he felt inclined to run away, he was rooted to the spot.

"Come in," said the old man. "I see that you are fatigued and wet. Make my poor home yours. You are welcome."

Tony entered the cottage, and the old man sat in silence for nearly a quarter of an hour.

"You are hungry?" he said, suddenly.

Tony confessed that he was, and put his hand in his pocket to take out his money, but the old man checked him.

"No," he said, "I can take nothing, because I can give you but little."

He placed a hard brown loaf and some tea before Tony, who enjoyed it heartily, as if it had been of the best.

"Hark!" said his host, putting his fingers to his lips. "Do you not hear that?"

"I hear nothing but the sighing of the wind," Tony replied.

"It may be so to your ears, but not to mine," the old man replied, "It is fairy music. It is the voice of my child, whom I loved so well, and lost so miserably."

The sound was repeated, and Tony trembled as he thought he heard a plaintive voice wailing.

"There it is again," the old man cried, almost triumphantly. "I see by your face that you hear and understand it now. Listen, and I will tell you why it comes so often."

Tony screwed up his knees, and placing his hands upon them, sat in a listening attitude.

"They call me 'Robert Brown' hereabouts," the old man began, "but my proper name is Richard Brunelle, and I have been told that I am of a good family. When I was young and sturdy I married the prettiest lass in the country, and after ten years she died and left me a daughter. At her mother's request, asked almost with her last breath, the child was called Agnes, and as she grew she became so much like her mother that she was soon a favorite with all. Seventeen years passed away, and during that time, hard as things often were with us, real sorrow never entered this door.



WILD ROSE AND VIOLET.—"THE GREETING THEY RECEIVED WAS CORDIAL, AND THE YOUNG STRANGERS SOON FOUND THEMSELVES AT THEIR EASE AMONGST THEIR NEW COMPANIONS."

One night, just such a one as this, dreary and wet, a young man, traveling on foot for amusement, sought the shelter of this roof. He seemed affable and kind-hearted, made himself thoroughly at home, and told us stories and anecdotes of his travels. The next day continued wet, and he staid and left us in the evening. In about a week I was surprised to see him again, and after this he came often. One night, tired and worn out, I came home from my work, and as was my usual custom, I called Agnes by name at the garden gate. She did not come out to meet me, and thinking that she was busy preparing my evening meal, I opened the door. There was no fire in the grate, nothing on the table. Oh, God! yes, there was—a scrap of paper which told me that I had no daughter. She had fled with the villain, and from that moment I was a broken-hearted man. I bore up, however, for I knew that Agnes would return. She did, in less than two years, and died in my arms. Her body rests in yonder churchyard, but her spirit still remains near her home; and often she calls to me as she used to do as my loving child, and then wails for forgiveness in tones so piteous that I often think I am going mad."

Richard Brunelle again buried his face in his hands.

Tony Limpback did not know what to do or say. One was suddenly alarmed by his host snatching up a candle and bidding him to follow.

"You cannot leave here in such weather," he said. "It is not fit for a dog to be abroad. The only bed I can give you is a hard one, but you are heartily welcome to it."

Thanking his host, Tony threw himself down on the hard mattress and tried to go to sleep.

But the more he tried the more signally he failed, and all night long the ghostly sound floated about the house, and Tony longed and prayed for daylight.

[To be continued.]

The "Three Merry Boys" was commenced in No. 626.

WILD ROSE AND VIOLET;

Or,

Fun at Mrs. Hawk's.

CHAPTER VII.

A PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION.

PERHAPS the experience preceptress divined something of this, for after having vainly endeavored to appall her dauntless pupil, she said, in freezing tones: "I did not expect such conduct as this from you, Miss Boynton; so soon, too, after your arrival. It is most obnoxious."

"Highly reprehensible!" murmured the Misses Hawk.

Rose, wondering what was the matter with them all, said simply, in reply:

"What have I done?"

At this question the eyebrows of the scholastic ladies went up simultaneously, as though they had been acted upon by some invisible wire at the back of their heads.

"What have you done?" echoed Mrs. Penelope, in a tone of stern surprise; "did you ever encounter such utter insensibility, my loves?" she added, appealing to her daughters.

"Never, mamma; never!" was the response.

"Nor I, never during the whole course of my professional experience," exclaimed their parent.

Then, turning to Rose, she continued:

"You are a rebel, miss! Do you know what a rebel is?"

Rose referred mentally for an instant to "Carpenter's Spelling," and then replied:

"One who rebels, ma'am."

"Which," continued Mrs. Hawk, "implies one who revolts from lawful authority, or who willfully violates a law, and this is what you have done. I ordered you to remain in the apartment, and you disobeyed that order, and in so doing caused Miss Leigh to participate in your transgression. Would you believe it, my dears?" she went on, turning to her daughters, "when I entered this room our new pupils were indulging in that unseeming mirth natural to uncultivated minds;"

and when I endeavored by a look of silent reproof to convince them, instead of subsiding at once into modest confusion, they had the audacity to giggle in my face, and not only giggle, but finally to burst forth into an explosion of laughter, utterly regardless of my presence. Shocking disrespect!"

"Terrible!" exclaimed the Hawk daughters, holding up their hands.

"Of one thing I am quite assured," the preceptress continued; "and that is that there is some deep-laid plot between you two. You have met before," she exclaimed, pointing her finger at Rose as the arch-conspirator. "Don't attempt to deny it!"

"I am not going to," said the latter, quietly. "We have met before."

"I knew it! I was sure of it!" cried Mrs. Hawk. "That accounts for everything. And pray, where did you meet?"

"At the railway station, where we stopped as we came to town," Rose answered.

"And pray, how long did you stop there?"

"Just long enough to learn to love one another," was the straightforward answer.

"And was this your first meeting?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"The idea of two girls forming a reciprocal attachment in so short a time!" exclaimed the preceptress, scornfully. "It is quite preposterous! Priscilla, Prudence, is it not absurd?"

"Oh, ridiculous to a degree!" returned the young ladies.

"It didn't take me half a minute," cried Rose, with a beaming smile, "for I loved Violet as soon as I saw her."

"And I loved Rose just as quickly," affirmed Violet, coming to her friend's assistance.

"You were not referred to, Miss Leigh," snapped Mrs. Hawk, turning upon her sharply. "Have the goodness to wait until you are addressed."

Poor Violet's sensitive nature was chilled by the stern, hard tone, and she made no reply.

Rose Boynton longed to throw her arm round her neck and comfort her with a kiss, but the presence of the Hawks restrained her.

However, she gilded her hand to that of Violet, and pressed it tenderly in token of her sympathy.

"I do not require anything emotional," Mrs. Hawk remarked, in a most frigid tone. "I never indulge in emotions myself, nor do I allow them amongst my pupils. Be good enough to leave Miss Leigh's hand alone."

There was a gleam of defiance in Rose Boynton's eyes at this injunction, exactly similar to that which had previously appeared there on the attempt to keep her from Violet.

But though she obeyed with evident reluctance, she at the same time rather startled Mrs. Hawk by asking, point blank:

"Do you object to your pupils loving each other, ma'am?"

The scholarly matron found this an awkward question to answer.



TALES WITH BOYS ABOUT FOREIGN LANDS.—A DUEL WITH RAWHIDES IN KORDOFAN.—SEE PAGE 62.

"I object to impertinent questions, Miss Royston. When I order you or any of my pupils to do a thing, or not to do it, I expect to be obeyed. You appear to me to have very extraordinary ideas, which I can only account for from the deplorable state of wildness in which you have been allowed to grow up. You are at present—speaking metaphorically—an obnoxious weed; it will be my task to transform you into a cultured flower."

Rose returned no answer, probably because she felt that anything she could have said would have failed to convince the stern preceptress.

The young girl's silence had an appeasing effect on Mrs. Hawk, inasmuch as she felt that her words had impressed her pupil at last.

She contemplated Rose for a few seconds, then she said:

"I observe, Miss Royston, that you have, for a young lady, an appearance of somewhat over-robust health, which degenerates into—pardon the expression—coarseness. I am not, however, surprised at this. Rambling in woods and forests, year after year—as I understand you were—from morning till night, and riding races on bare-backed donkeys, would lead naturally to such a result."

Rose heartily wished she had been engaged in that exhilarating exercise at that moment; but she remained silent.

"If you notice, my dears," she said to her daughters, "there is a tendency to muscular development in Miss Royston utterly subversive of that delicacy of outline which should be perceptible in the—a—youthful female figure. You observe this, do you not?"

The Misses Hawk shut an eye apiece, and holding their heads on one side, like a pair of meditative sparrows, to get a correct view, took a survey of the well-knit, graceful limbs of the muscular scholar.

The result of this inspection was an entire coinciding with their experienced parent.

"You are undoubtedly correct, mamma; but of course you always are," said Priscilla. "There is decidedly too much breadth of shoulder, and the neck lacks that swan-like slenderness and grace which—a—a—every female neck should possess, whilst her waist—well—she is young at present."

The fair speaker was herself of the scraggy order.

The young lady, however, was merciful to the new pupil who had the misfortune to be so healthfully and vigorously molded.

Of course, it could not be expected that every one could be like her.

And then Rose was young, and would doubtless improve with time and attention.

So after the three inspectors had sufficiently criticised all Rose's points, the matron Hawk said, in a tone of much self-complacency, to her daughter Priscilla:

"We cannot all possess the classical and Norman-like contour of figure for which you are so remarkable, my dear; nor the Hebe-ish proportions which characterize our beloved Prudence. But still we may hope, by a course of mental exercise, which greatly influences the bodily frame, and a régime restrained within judicious bounds, to suppress the redundancy of muscle, and to refine and improve that which we may not be able to make perfect."

The preceptress then turned to Rose and, addressing her, continued:

"For the present, Miss Royston, you will be placed in the semi-diet. If that is not found to answer the desired end, it will be reduced to demi-semi, and I have no doubt we shall soon perceive a marked alteration for the better."

The two friends glanced at each other from out of the corners of their eyes, and again the faint sensation of a tendency to giggle seized upon them; but, by a strong effort, they controlled themselves. Still they could not help wondering what "semi" and "demi-semi" diet was like.

Neither could remember ever having tasted it, and Rose Royston settled it in her own mind that it must be some peculiar species of dumpling which she had never as yet tasted.

The principal looked at her watch.

"Half-past eleven! she exclaimed; then, turning to her pupils, she said: "You will now accompany me to the schoolroom, where I shall introduce you to your future companions. It was my intention," she added, fixing her eyes particularly upon Rose, "to have acted with severity in your case, Miss Royston; but as you appear to have become more impressed with a sense of the respect due to your instructors I shall give you a chance of atoning for your misconduct. The young ladies take their recreation at twelve, and you will have time to become accustomed to the numerous eyes that will be fixed upon you before the school breaks up. This remark refers rather to Miss Leigh than yourself, for it seems to me you have acquired a very bad habit of staring at people. I think I saw a girl open her eyes so widely in my life. This must be corrected."

The principal was about to turn toward the door, when she paused suddenly, as though a new idea had struck her, and once more ran her eyes over Rose; but this time it was her attire, not herself, that was the object of inspection.

Having made the survey, Mrs. Hawk conferred with her daughters for a moment, and then turning again to Rose, she said:

"Are the clothes you now wear the only ones you have?"

"Oh, no, ma'am," Rose replied; "my every-day things are in my box. I should like to change them, if you please. I do not wish to play in my Sunday frock."

"Your Sunday frock!" echoed the principal, with horror in her looks and tone as she contemplated the unfashionable, unpretentious garment. "If this be your 'Sunday frock,' as you call it, goodness only knows what your every-day one must be like! And then your shoes!—I really never saw anything so dreadful! They have—yes, positively—they have nails in the soles. Your uncle must be written to immediately on the subject. I could never allow a pupil of mine to be attired in so *outré* and unfashionable a manner, or to wear boots fit for a milkmaid. It would ruin the reputation of my establishment."

Having thus explained herself, Mrs. Hawk led the way to the schoolroom, and throwing open the door with her customary startling bang, bade them enter.

The command was instantly obeyed, and Rose Royston and Violet Leigh found themselves in the intellectual department of the Meditation House School, with forty pairs of eyes fastened upon them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "JOLLY GIRLS."

THE murmured remarks of the young ladies produced an effect not unlike the buzzing of a swarm of bees.

"They seem nice girls, don't they?"

"Yes. Which is the prettier—the light or the dark one?"

"The light."

"No; the dark, I think."

"What large eyes she has!"

"Doesn't she stare!"

"Oh, what a frightful dress she wears!"

"She seems a jolly girl, though, for all that; doesn't she?"

"That she does. Looks as if she were fond of a lark."

Such were a few of the whispered comments that passed from lip to lip; but these were quickly put a stop to by the deep contralto voice of the principal.

"Silence, young ladies!" she exclaimed, in an authoritative tone.

Every tongue was mute in an instant, and the preceptress continued:

"It is my pleasing task to introduce to you these two young ladies, who have just become members of our intellectual circle—Miss Rose Royston and Miss Violet Leigh."

The principal indicated each as she spoke, and then went on:

"To those among you who have been under my supervision for any length of time I need not say that I look to you to act the part of beacon lights to these young strangers. They are entirely different from each other, both in appearance and in their idiosyncrasies, and both have suffered—but from different causes, especially—from injudicious treatment in their past existence. You all know my principles. Let, then, your example act as stimulants to induce a proper degree of implicit obedience, and to excite a thirst for knowledge in the minds of these benighted young creatures."

Having concluded this piece of oratory, Mrs. Hawk said, pointing to two vacant places:

"Miss Royston and Miss Leigh, you can take your seats."

In a short time afterward the clock struck twelve.

"You can dismiss the young ladies, Miss Drudger," said the principal, as she made her exit from the schoolroom.

There was a considerable clattering of slates and banging of desks, and in a few moments the schoolroom was comparatively empty.

Those who remained were a few unfortunates, who, having failed to reach the required point of mental brilliancy in some particular branch of study, were consequently deprived of their usual recreation.

Rose and Violet stood for a moment contemplating the rueful expression of the defaulters' faces, and then the former said to one of them, inquiringly:

"Why don't you go out like the rest?"

"Because I'm kept in," was the reply.

"What for?"

"For this horrid geography," explained the fair prisoner, pushing a map before her. "I'm to be stuck in here until I have got by heart thirty of these dreadful Pacific Islands. Isn't it a nuisance? The more I pore over them the less I seem to remember. I wish there was no such thing as geography!"

"Oh, do you?" said Rose. "I like geography; I can learn that as quickly as anything."

"So can I," joined in Violet.

"Oh, you!" exclaimed a perplexed victim at the shrine of ancient history, "geography's easy enough, but these Roman emperors would bother any one. What do I want to know about Vitellius and Heliogabalus, and Nero, and Domitian, and the other brutes? I'd sooner, by half, read 'Telemachus';it is interesting."

"Ah, you may grumble at history and geography," murmured a third culprit, fretfully. "All the islands and emperors that were ever invented are nothing to botany. The classification of plants is perfectly bewildering."

"I don't think any one could study botany from books, and shut up in a close schoolroom."

"Of course not!" warmly acquiesced the botanical prisoner; "I know I can't."

"Dear old Solomon Wyse used to say," Rose continued, "that the only book to teach botany is the book of Nature, that every one may read in the fields and in the woods."

"He was right," eagerly exclaimed the student. "I could learn it there. That would make all the difference. But who's Solomon Wyse?"

"My schoolmaster—at least he used to be when I lived in the country," returned Rose.

"Was he kind?"

"I should think he was, too," she answered, her face glowing with affectionate earnestness. "He was the dearest old man in the world."

"Was he never cross?"

"Never."

"Didn't keep you in, I suppose?"

"Keep me in?" echoed Rose, almost indignantly. "Not he! Why, I never went to school at all unless I felt in the humor."

"Oh, that must have been nice!" sighed all the prisoners at once. "Then I suppose you didn't go very often?"

"Not in the fine weather, but I liked to go in the Winter," Rose answered; "but, then, Solomon wasn't like a schoolmaster."

"Not like a schoolmaster?"

"No; he was more like a father."

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THE NOTCH IN THE MESA.

(Continued from page 62.)

The fallen horse was a fair sort of breastwork to shoot over, but the bullets and arrows were beginning to fall around him too thickly for any kind of comfort. The red raiders were up to all their accustomed ways of swinging behind their ponies as they came within range, and it was no easy work to get a shot at one, even, for so skilled an expert as Abner.

"Wonder if Molly'll ever know I died a-fightin' for her," muttered the apparently doomed rifleman.

Just then a brave, at whom he had not been aiming, uttered a shrill death whoop and dropped from his pony, as the sharp crack of a rifle rang out from the chasms of the mesa.

Another followed and another, in quick and deadly succession, and the startled savages wheeled rapidly away from what began to look very much like an intentional ambush.

Here, they thought, was the explanation of the white man's strange bravado. He had only been drawing them within range of his friends among the rocks, and the track had already cost them three of their best warriors.

They were yelling and whooping their disgust at a safe distance, as fast as their ponies could carry them, and Abner might have got up and marched safely back to camp for all of them, if it had not been for the stupidity of Bill Frame.

The sight of his old friend and comrade facing such deadly peril all alone had been too much for Bill's jealousy. It had called up all the rough chivalry of his nature, and, after delivering those three deadly shots from his cover in the ravine, he very foolishly remounted his mustang and rode swiftly out upon the level.

"Bill," exclaimed Abner, "is that you?"

"Yes, Ab, I'm on hand. Two's better'n one any day."

"It ain't enough, though, Bill. My hoss is down and I don't keer to go back no how, seein' how things are goin'. You jest ride in while your chance is good. I don't want to hurt your feelin's, but you kin tell Molly Morley I fit my best for her."

"Look here, Ab," said Bill, with a sad light rising in his eyes, "there isn't anything between Molly and me. You jest take my mustang and ride in and I'll git down there in your place. You kin tell Jess wher you left me and what I was doin' when you left."

"Bill," exclaimed Abner, "here they come! No time now for foolin'. There's a hull raft on 'em, and we mustn't let 'em git by. Not while we're alive. Think of the girls. I reckon they've sold us both, but it's too late to git road now."

The Sioux had, indeed, discovered the truth of the situation, and were more than ever determined to get the scalps of those two desperate white men. Vengeance, if nothing else, demanded as much as that.

They would have had them, too, beyond a doubt before many minutes, skilfully and gallantly as the sore-hearted pair defended their forlorn position, but the wind from the prairie had, indeed, carried to camp the sound of those repeated rifle-shots, and old Ben Morley had promptly summoned his teamsters and every other man in the outfit to mount and ride.

"We'll have to leave the teams a'most alone," he said, as he saw his daughters half hysterically following the general example. "The gain'll really be safer with us, no matter what's a-comin'. That's right, gals. Come along!"

Perhaps they would have come anyhow, with or without any parental encouragement, but when that very efficient-looking party came galloping into the Notch, old Ben Morley could scarcely be said to be at the head of it.

The Sioux were in the very act of "charging home" on Ab and Bill when the reinforcement swept around the turn of the rocks. They had suffered severely that morning, and they had no stomach for a collision with more white men of that sort, even if led, as these seemed to be, by a couple of "white squaws." With a parting shot and yell they wheeled and dashed away for the plains, leaving Bill and Abner unhurt, though scarcely able to believe it.

They knew what it meant, though, and somehow it seemed as if the same impulse came to both of them. They stood like a pair of statues, gazing after their dying foes, but without casting so much as a glance behind them.

"Bill!" exclaimed Jessie, with a great sob.

"Abner! oh, forgive me!" whispered Molly, and one of Ben's teamsters blurted out:

"I say, Ben! if them gals of your'n haven't grabbed them two fellers right around the neck."

"I don't keer if they hev," remarked old Ben; "and it somehow looks as though they'd each concerned the right man. I never knowed which was which afore."

And old Ben was right, for there had been no mistake made, whatever.

THE ROUND TABLE.

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ENIGMAS, CHARADES, ETC.

1.—DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

Primals and finals, although long dead,
Yet often make the schoolboy dread.

Of this are houses sometimes made;
This often lent to knights its aid;
This is always oft is seen;
While to do this they hate who're mean;
A pleasant place is fifth, I ween.

2.—SQUARE WORDS.

A boy's name; a goddess; salary; not apt; repulsive.

3.—CHARADE.

When I was young, and very whole, indeed,
I hunger felt, and second cried in need;
For though my first I saw where men could feed,
Not a third had I; it made my heart to bleed.

4.—CHARADE.

Some first at cards were playing,
When one was seen to hide my last;
The rest with whole conveying,
Their joint reproaches at him cast.

5.—DIAMOND PUZZLE.

A thousand; a fowl; distinction; threats; negative and a well-known fish; a color; a consonant.

6.—SQUARE WORDS.

Possessed of wisdom and a letter; a representation; a cavalry sword; a fowl; edible roots.

7.—DIAMOND REMAINDERS.

Behead and curtail the following words and leave a perfect diamond puzzle: A fish; foolish; leaping; glossy; a pigment.

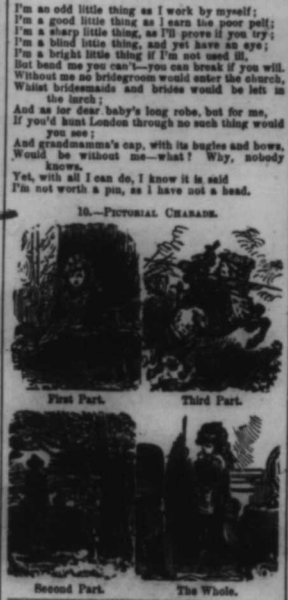
8.—LOGOGRIPH.

When Satan first permissive in me dwelt,
And I his fell, demoniac spirit felt,
Impelled by passion, down the rugged steep
With violence I plunged into the deep.
Behead me, I become a potent juice;
Cut off my tail, and I shall nothing lose;
Again behead, you'll think me vain, no doubt,
When I assert you will not find me out;
But to conclude, curtail me once again,
And though 'tis singular, I whole remain.

9.—ENIGMA.

I'm an odd little thing as I work by myself;
I'm a good little thing as I earn the poor pelf;
I'm a sharp little thing, as I'll prove if you try;
I'm a blind little thing, and yet have an eye;
I'm a bright little thing if I'm not used ill,
But bend me you can't—you can break if you will.
Without me no bridegroom would enter the church,
Whilst bridesmaids and brides would be left in the lurch;
And as for dear baby's long robe, but for me,
If you'd hunt London through no such thing would you see;
And grandmamma's cap, with its bugles and bows,
Would be without me—what? Why, nobody knows.
Yet, with all I can do, I know it is said
I'm not worth a pin, as I have not a head.

10.—PICTORIAL CHARADE.



First Part. Third Part.

Second Part. The Whole.

FUN FOR THE BOYS.

JOHNNY was whipped at school for a piece of mischief done by another boy. Verdict, a mis-placed switch.

PRINTERS' RULES.—Upon coming into the office the other day, we asked the "compositor" his rule of punctuating. Said he: "I set up as long as I can hold breath, then I put in a comma; when I gape, I insert a semicolon; when I sneeze, a colon; and when I want to take another chew of tobacco, I insert a period." We cannot withhold these rules, so admirable for their simplicity, from the public.

AN auctioneer, at a sale of antiquities, put up a helmet with the following candid observation, "This, ladies and gentlemen, is a helmet of Romulus, the Roman founder, but whether he was a brass or iron founder, I cannot tell."

WHICH is the best of trees? A straight fir. Why? Because it is fir-straight.

WHEN the landlady discovered that her boarders were dropping off, the burden of her song became "Nothing but leaves."

TUNNELING.—A young and very pretty lady, riding on the cars of the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad, was observed to have a piece of court-plaster on her lip. When the cars had emerged from the long, dark tunnel on the road into the light, it was observed to have disappeared; but the eye instantly detected it clinging to the lip of a young man on the same seat with her; they both looked as innocent as if they "hadn't been doing nothing."

"Do you think, William," said Mrs. Brown to her husband, "that the telephone will ever be as generally used as the telegraph?" "Why, yes," replied Brown. "The time is coming when it will be as common to telephone as it seems to be now to tell—a fib."

"I WISH I knew how to earn a living," said an idler. "Go to work," growled a neighbor. "Sure enough," rejoined the idler, "I never thought of that."

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THE NOTCH IN THE MESA.

By COL. CHRIS. FORREST.

WHAT is a *mesa*? Well, some call a range of hills by that name; but I should say it more properly belonged to the sort of steep and sudden descent from one table-land to another.

There are plenty of them in the west country, and no two so near alike that you could tell what one was from having seen the other.

The *mesa* I am speaking of was on the old Denver road.

The railway runs through the "Notch" now, and they were talking of it then, but all the track old Ben Morley had for his "train" was the deep ruts left behind them by any number of other wagons. The army trains had cut the deepest, for some of them had pulled through in the worst kind of weather.

To tell the truth, there were enough of wrecks of teams of all sorts scattered along that trail, not to speak of human bones here and there, to have scared back a fainter-hearted man than old Ben; especially if you took into account what he had brought along with him.

He had a first-class outfit, and no mistake; but it was not so much his mules and his wagons, and his "horned critters," and his general plunder, that weighed on the heart of the veteran pioneer.

His last settlement had been broken up more by the loss of his wife than by any hunger for a better location, and the greatest treasure and comfort she had left him was with him now in that train.

It was a sort of double comfort, and a double trouble, too, for which ever way you choose to look at it, there was two of it, and both of it was a daughter.

If that description is a little mixed, so were old Ben's feelings whenever his keen old eyes wandered from Jess to Molly and asked which of them was worth the most to him.

What would he not have given, any hour of the three days before he reached the Notch, to have seen those two girls safe in Denver, or anywhere else but on that trail!

Not that the train had been molested, but there was no telling when it might be, for there had been plenty of "Indian signs," and more than one warning had been received that the Sioux, or at least a part of that great and lovely nation, were on the warpath. No intimation of their possible peril had been given to Jess or Molly, and the two light-hearted young beauties had therefore chatted and laughed away the long miles and hours of each day's successive journey as gayly as if there were no such wild animals in existence as those same Sioux.

It had been clean fun for them every inch of the way, for the pure air from the Sierras had added its keen exhilaration to the natural overflow of their high spirits, and Abner Link and Bill Frame, poor fellows, had been compelled to reap the consequence.

There had been quite a harvest already, or they thought so, but it was by no means all in yet, as they were about to discover.

Tall, strong, good-looking fellows were Ab and Bill, as fine specimens of young plainsmen as you would meet in a whole campaign, and they had been close cronies up to the very hour they fell in with old Ben Morley's outfit.

Even then they had managed to keep up a semblance of good-fellowship, in spite of the bright eyes of Mary and Jessie, until the very afternoon preceding the day of their arrival at the Notch.

Just how it had come about they could not even then have told, but when old Ben's wagons went into camp for the night, Abner Link and Bill Frame needed all the attention of their lady-friends to keep them from making an appointment to settle the matter in their own way at sunrise next morning.

"Abner," said Jessie, "if you quarrel with Bill, I'll never forgive you."

And Ab could scarcely remember afterward just what sort of an answer he had made, only he was sure it was civil, for he would not have failed in good manners for anything in the world; leastwise with a young lady like Jess Morley.

"Bill," remarked Mary, at about the same time, but at some rods distance along the road, "you will keep the peace with Abner, won't you? For my sake, now!"

And Bill had grumbled something almost inaudible through his thick, brown beard, and had clutched his heavy, long-range repeating rifle a little more firmly, but he had to promise.

So there was peace in the camp that night, to all outward appearances, and the two girls compared notes on the subject after they found themselves safe under the white tilt of their own wagon.

They were treading on dangerous ground, and they knew it, but the very fact was brimful of a certain strong fascination. The sense of power is pretty sure to lead to the exercise of it, whether in a wise way or otherwise.

"Jess," said Molly, at last, "I tell you what let's do. Don't let either one of us speak to either of them all day to-morrow."

"I never saw another such a girl as Jessie Morley," grumbled Bill to himself. "I don't believe I ever shall—not on these plains. But I can't stand her fooling on with Ab Link, day after day. Either he's got to quit or I have, and that's all there is about it."

And Abner gave the lower folds of his blanket a savage kick as he hoarsely whispered:

"No, I s'pose I mustn't pick a fuss with him, but he mustn't ride all day again alongside of Molly Morley. Flesh and blood can't stand it. I won't, that's flat."

There was mischief brewing, and no doubt of it, and the plans of the two young beauties for the morrow's fun were scarcely calculated to make matters any better.

Old Ben was up before sunrise, and so were his daughters. So, too, were the young plainsmen, and which of the latter rolled out of his blanket in the worst humor it would have been hard to tell.

They had their morning duties in the care of horses and weapons, not to speak of breakfast, and it was just after he had finished the latter that Abner Link found himself face to face with Jessie Morley.

He was preparing his voice and smile for the politest sort of a response to her expected greeting, when, to his utter astonishment, the fair Jessie marched past him without a look or a word to intimate that she had ever been acquainted with any such person.

"Hullo! what on airth's up now!" exclaimed Abner, but just then he heard the voice of old Ben, almost in his ear, saying:

"Ab, my boy, I ain't easy, I ain't. I wish you'd



THE NOTCH IN THE MESA.—"NOT MUCH OF AN OBSTACLE, ONE WOULD THINK. ONLY ONE MAN, LYING FLAT BEHIND A DYING HORSE, OVER WHICH HE WAS LEVELING A 'BLUE BARREL' AT THE NEAREST OF THE FANTASTIC RIDERS."

"What'll they do about it?" said Jessie.

"They? Oh, they'll be as meek as mice. Don't you be afraid. They're too much in love for anything."

"It's a little mean," said Jessie, a trifle dubiously, "but I don't care if we try it on. Only we must look out and not carry it too far."

"Too far? Oh, I wouldn't hurt either one of them for the world, only it'll be such fun to see how they'll take it."

They were very young, those coquettish twins, less than twenty years apiece, and that made less than forty between them.

Some people of forty, all their own, show as little sense about some matters as old Ben Morley's girl, did about that.

As for Ben himself, however, he had had his sharp eyes out in all directions, and he had not missed any great part of what was going forward in his own camp.

"I can't say, just yet," he remarked to himself, "precisely which is which and who is who. They're both likely young fellows, and I wouldn't mind countin' in either one on 'em. No, nor both on 'em. I reckon the gals know thar own bis better'n I kin tell 'em, now they mother's gone, but I reckon I'd best do somethin' to keep the boys apart a leetle, leastwise, till I kinder know what's what."

Both Bill and Abner were disposed to keep the promises they had made to their lady friends, but they were conscious that it would be much easier to do so if they should keep a respectable distance apart. It was, therefore, by a species of common consent that they did not meet that evening.

They kept up a pretty steady stream of thinking and growling, nevertheless, even after they had rolled themselves in their Navajo blankets, and curled down to make believe sleep.

Just ride back on our trail, as far as the mouth of the Notch, and scout around. If you see anything s'picious, you kin ride on and give the alarm. P'raps you may git a chance to knock over some fresh meat. Will you go?"

"Of course I will."

Never in all his life before had Ab felt quite so willing to get out of camp and have a good ride on his own account, but he felt more so by the time he had his horse saddled.

It was Mary this time, and she had never looked so bewitchingly beautiful in the eyes of her sinewy, sunburned admirer. He felt all the hot blood in him rising to his face as he tried to say "good-morning."

Mary Morley's blue eyes caught the look, half of bashfulness, half of pain, and she came very near abandoning her plan for tormenting him. If he had only mustered courage to say one word, but he did not, and so she did not, and the next moment he was in the saddle, spurring away like mad down the trail.

It was well he did not meet his old friend and supposed rival just then, but he did not, for Bill was unconsciously marching in for his own share in the disturbance.

He reversed Abner's luck by receiving his first cut from Mary, and by the time Jessie, in her turn, had given him a silent "go by," he was just in the right frame of mind to grasp at old Ben's suggestion, that he should "ride ahead and scout around, to see if there was likely to be anything in the way of a good long push toward Denver."

He rode on rapidly at first, but ugly thoughts were rising in his mind as his good mustang sprang forward. He muttered, "I saw Ab and the old man talkin' together just after breakfast, confidential-like. There's somethin' up betwixt 'em, sure's you live, and I'm bound to learn what it is. Ab rode back toward the Notch. I guess I can strike a circuit around and come down the road. Even if I have to work that on foot, and I don't believe I will."

No sooner said than done, or rather begun, for the circuit he spoke of required more than a little hard riding. Bill Frame was used to that sort of thing, however, and in due course of time he rode out on the crest of the steep declivity, furrowed with deep ravines and clefts, at the foot of which wound the old trail, just as the railway track does now.

He pulled in his horse sharply, he looked, and then, with a loud and sudden exclamation, he threw himself from the saddle, and began to lead his mustang recklessly down the jagged and difficult pass of the nearest ravine.

He had seen enough in that swift glance to draw an exclamation from the lips of almost any man. The broken level below was alive with wild horsemen, fantastically dressed and undressed, careering hither and thither as if they longed to charge on through the Notch, and yet were held in check by some obstacle or other.

Not much of an obstacle, one would think. Only one man, lying flat behind a dying horse, over which he was leveling a "blue barrel" at the nearest of the fantastic riders.

Some of them had ridden too near already, as more than one painted body, stark and still, or writhing in the short, dry grass, bore ghastly witness.

Abner Link had ridden clean through the Notch before he had discovered any signs of danger, and

Closer and closer rode the Sioux scalpers, many of whom carried firearms instead of the bow and arrows of their fathers. More of them were rapidly coming up, and their boldness increased with their numbers.

[For conclusion, see page 63.]